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The War in the Gulf and the "Peace" in the Middle East

IMPERIALISM AND REVOLUTIONARY STRUGGLE AGAINST IMPERIALISM IN THE ARAB-ISLAMIC WORLD AND IN THE METROPOLIS



ORGANIZZAZIONE COMUNISTA INTERNAZIONALISTA

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INTRODUCTION

The war in the Gulf has posed communists and the proletariat a number of questions which, *mutatis mutandis*, concern the complex of relationships between imperialism and the countries dominated by imperialism. We believe that this is enough to justify the translation and collection in this Notebook of some of the texts of analysis and battle produced by our organisation before, during and after the criminal "Desert Massacre".

Our position is very clear. **Beyond** and **underlying** its evident inter-imperialist and inter-bourgeoisie contrasts, the UN-USA aggression against Iraq was fundamentally aimed at hitting the **Arab-Islamic proletariat and exploited masses** who refuse to bow down before the increasingly exorbitant "vital needs" of Western pillage and super-exploitation. At the same time, another target of the imperialist war was **the metropolitan working class**, called upon to discipline itself to the full in support of the needs of its "own" capitalism, not only in the name of the crisis, but also in that of war.

Given the class character of the conflict, the duty of the revolutionary vanguard operating in the metropoli was to reject any form of equidistance between the two "sides" by resolutely condemning imperialist aggression and **unconditionally** supporting the oppressed **masses** of Iraq, the Middle East, Islam (and all of the "periphery"). And it is the same today, with the continuation of the war against Iraq by "peaceful" means, the announced attack against Libya, the crushing of the Intifadah, the installation of Western-martial regimes in Peru and Algeria, the strangulation of Cuba ... and so on to infinity.

Unfortunately, with very few exceptions, the majority of so-called communist forces remained far from any consistent class and internationalist understanding of the facts and line of action.

Most of them kept themselves **outside** the conflict. Incapable of distinguishing, in world capitalism, the dominating usurer countries from those which are dependent and oppressed, they set the imperialist mega-coalition on the same plane as dominated and strangled Iraq. Incapable of distinguishing between countries, peoples and classes, they reduced the war of the Gulf to a battle between States ("the war of Bush and Saddam"), failing to distinguish the **bourgeois regimes** of the Arab-Islamic world from its **exploited masses**. Incapable of seeing the dialectic nexus between the anti-imperialist and the

"pure" anti-capitalist struggle, they deluded themselves into thinking that they could encourage the latter by denigrating and contributing towards the isolation of the anti-imperialist uprising in the Middle East.

This kind of "**indifferentism**" likes to garland itself with "internationalist" and "proletarian" flowers, but the facts show that it is only an additional obstacle to the already extremely arduous process of reunifying the international front of the proletariat and the exploited.

The cause of proletarian internationalism was certainly not better served by those forces who, in absolute continuity with Stalinist Menshevism, "confused" militant support for the rebellion of the oppressed Islamic masses with accrediting the anti-imperialism of their existing demagogic or reactionary points of reference (beginning with Saddam Hussein). Although claiming the maximum "unity" and efficiency of the struggle against imperialism, this policy (beginning with China in 1927) has never led to anything but negative results for revolutionary anti-feudal and anti-imperialist uprisings, **curbing** their impact in backward areas **as much as** in the citadels of imperialism, and contributing towards **breaking** their material and ideal relationship with the communist perspective.

Consequently, as far as the "revolutionary milieu" is concerned, ours has been a struggle **on two fronts**: against chauvinism (however disguised), and against interclassist opportunism (however embellished).

The main theoretical assumption of our position is the re-affirmation of the **absolute contemporaneity of the Marxist conception of imperialism**, more than ever capable of taking into account the reality of modern capitalism as a **contradictory whole**.

In the course of the XXth century, world capitalism has in no way become more "balanced" or "egalitarian" in terms of the relationships between its parts; quite the opposite. It has managed to ensure its further significant development **only** by **exasperating** its original character as an "unequal and combined entity". The world of capital and human beings (wage earners and not) has, so to say, passed from a phase of **formal** dependence on financial capital to one of more profound **real** dependence. The dictatorship of more centralised capital over world politics and the economy has been gradually perfected. Primitive capitalist colonialism founded upon the permanent military occupation of the territories to be squeezed has been replaced, as Bordiga said, by a more refined and despotic **financial and thermonuclear colonialism**. With its monopoly of loans and the nuclear deterrent (in addition to its monopoly of trade and the decisive means of production), this latter colonialism has arms of universal totalitarian domination which are even more efficient than those of its progenitor.

The continuing process of imperialist centralisation of capital and capitalistic political power is automatically fed by blocking growth in the dominated countries and, in any case, by rigidly subjecting them to the priorities of the "centre"; by the subservience of the majority of formally "independent" minor states to a handful of monstrous but truly sovereign super-States; and, **at the**

base of everything, by the merciless exploitation of the coloured working masses.

Precisely because of the organic disequilibrium in the opportunities of arriving at the capitalist accumulation which determines hyper-development on the one hand and under-development on the other, the proletariat and exploited masses of the "backward" areas operate on a particular socio-economic terrain which is **different** from that of the metropoli. Making here an abstraction of nevertheless remarkable specificity, it can be said that in these countries the installation of capitalist production relationships is **largely incomplete and twisted**, permanently held back by internal and "external" forces, and structurally exposed - with the worsening of the general crisis of capitalism - to devastating backward leaps. It follows that the class stratification and the **immediate** tasks of the proletariat cannot be the same in the dominated as in imperialist countries.

Consequently, although it is true that there is an underlying identity in the class interests of the world's proletariat, it must not be forgotten that the mechanism of imperialism (albeit in a more capitalistic global context) unceasingly regenerates and exacerbates national oppression and the national question. And this means that, once again (as the Gulf War has confirmed for the "nth" time), communists and the proletariat have to face "old" **national** and **democratic** problems.

The **invariant** criterion of class which communist organisations must respect in this context was established once and for all by Marx and Engels in their examination of the Irish question (and, in a less complete and less explicit manner, in their writings on India and China): to identify national and democratic tasks, accept responsibility for them, and carry them out **in relationship with** and **in subordination to** the historical interests of the international proletariat. This means, on the one hand, highlighting the fact that the oppression of countries and nations can be **definitively** overcome only by means of the definitive uprooting of capitalism and pre-capitalist residues; on the other, that the revolutionary proletariat (particularly the **proletariat of the metropoli**), with its own programme and its own party, must **immediately** accept responsibility for leading the anti-colonial and anti-imperialist uprisings from which, insofar as it is class *per sé*, it has only everything to gain.

This is the classical Marxist approach adopted and repeated by us at the time of the Gulf War. We have always said that the interests of the metropolitan working class in defeating its own enemy and in transforming an imperialist war into a class war for socialism meant **unconditionally** siding with the Arab and Islamic masses mobilised against imperialist aggression.

We have received the superficial criticism of wanting to transfer onto the shoulders of the proletariat a burden of bourgeois tasks which (so they said!) the "capitalistic super-development" of the Middle East would have made obsolete. But this contestation is flawed by the fact that it bears no relationship to the reality.

It is true that, since the times of the II Congress of the Communist

International and the Eastern Peoples' Congress of Baku (upon which OCI strategy is based), capitalism **has moved on**, at an international level "as" in the Arab-Islamic world. But it has done so following its typical centralising antithetical method, both in terms of capital-labour relationships and in terms of the relationships between "national" capitalisms. Consequently, today's world is **inseparably** more capitalistic than ever (however in any case, very far from being only capitalistic) and, because of the mechanisms of capitalism itself, more than ever divided and unequal.

What comes from all this? In the countries ruled or controlled by imperialism, **the need for a democratic revolution** (as we say in relation to the Arab-Islamic world) is still a **necessity**: today - and this is new - it has a **mainly anti-imperialist** content; yesterday, it was mainly anti-colonialist (against the first form of imperialist colonialism); the day before yesterday, anti-feudal. The responsibility for the organisation, extension and radicalisation of this revolution falls increasingly more directly and exclusively on the proletariat and the disinherited semi-proletarian masses. Finally, the extreme development of the objective and subjective contradictions of capitalist production, while not bringing at all Africa, Asia and Latin America to the level of the West, have nevertheless **maximised** the closeness of the relationship between the anti-imperialist struggle and the international proletarian revolution.

It is for this reason that we favourably welcomed the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait, seeing it as a gesture which the Baghdad regime was **forced** to make under the combined and opposed pressure of the West and of the oppressed masses of the Middle East. A gesture (**and this is the point**) which, regardless of the calculations and wishes of Saddam, would have thrown further fuel onto the flames of the anti-imperialist fire in the region which has been burning since at least 1979. Stoking this fire would provide an optimum incentive for relaunching the proletarian struggle in the West which, in its turn, would have provided the germinating Arab-Islamic Intifadah with its "natural" class leadership.

Such an interpretation does not imply **any** revaluation of the Baa'thist regime, which needs to be condemned by Marxists because it is **anti-proletarian from top to bottom** (but **only** for this reason; which has nothing to do with the "rape" of the virgin Kuwaiti Satrap described by **imperialist** international law). At the same time, any suspension of the class struggle between the exploited Iraqis and Kurds and the Iraqi bourgeoisie, substituting it with the policy of an "anti-imperialist block", is to be excluded. However, the reasons for this must be clearly understood.

Since the **Manifesto**, the revolutionary proletariat has admitted the possibility/necessity of **war pacts** with other classes interested (for themselves) in changing first feudal, and then bourgeois production relationships. This approach is, at the same time, **obligatory** and **full of insidiousness** for our class and the Communist Party. Opportunism and Stalinism have changed this into an anti-revolutionary practice, **overturning** Lenin's (which is the same as saying

Marxist) policy towards the classes in the middle. This is the incontestable fact which certain simplistic "revolutionaries" have used for categorically rejecting any "impure" relationship with the non-proletarian classes.

But Marxist anti-reformism concedes nothing to idealism, always bringing attention back to **objective contradictions**. It is the structural forms of pre-capitalist production and capitalism, as well as the ways in which one succeeds the other, which determine the fact that, in the various phases of its struggle for socialism, the proletariat finds itself alongside other social forces who have no interest (or only partial interest) in the preservation of the "existent". In this situation, there are only two possibilities: **either** the proletariat is successful in using the albeit conditioned and unstable support of these classes for its **own** ends, **or** it leaves the field free for its class enemy to operate in an opposite manner.

Nothing more nor less, but also nothing different from this. The proletariat neither confuses nor merges itself with other classes. It cannot make any stable alliances, defined once and for all and designed to last for a long period of time; even less can it make any alliances **without struggle**. (In a sense, the very term "alliance" needs to be handled with care because, as a result of decades of stalinism, it has taken on a series of meanings in contrast with the one which has been applied by revolutionary communism since the **Manifesto**.) From the time of their first faltering steps, the proletariat has taken care never to renounce its own separate identity of programme and organisation in the name of anti-feudal revolution or of an "alliance" (**albeit pursued**) with the revolutionary bourgeoisies who, as early as 1848, were being branded for their cowardice and inconsequentiality.

In the same way, when Lenin's International launched the prospect of a united world anti-capitalist front in 1920 (at the very beginning of the imperialist epoch), addressing itself to the peoples oppressed by imperialism, it did so by making it clear that the ideological and active leadership of the Front was the task of the revolutionary metropolitan proletariat, and by offering itself as the point of reference **not** to indistinct and bourgeois-led national blocks, **but** to the semi-proletarian peasant masses.

It is with greater reason that, in 1991, with a considerably more "mature" imperialist age (and a consequently more "mature" communist revolution), we **must exclude** social and political fronts with the bourgeoisies such as those to be found in Arab and Islamic countries, which are increasingly more repressive towards the proletariat and poor masses and, precisely because of their rickets, increasingly less radical towards pre-capitalistic forces and imperialism.

In general, the same can be said for all of the bourgeoisies in the coloured continents, who find themselves in an extremely contradictory position. **On the one hand**, insofar as they are trying to free themselves from the restraints that the West has imposed on their growth and to make the distribution of profits and incomes "more equal", their interests conflict with those of imperialist

capital and its institutions (imperialist states, the IMF, the UN, etc.), and they therefore need **a degree** of anti-imperialist mobilisation to loosen the grip of the West. **On the other**, they are the first to fear that this mobilisation might escape their control (because, in their weakness they would be the first to pay the consequences) and that it might, on the initiative of the exploited masses themselves, overturn the objectives and methods of bourgeois nationalism.

As a result of this contradiction, the various Khomeinis, Saddam Husseins, Ghedaffis, Madanis, Ortegas, Mandelas and so on, can do nothing but continuously oscillate between one position and the other, making **one step forward and one or two steps back** in the face of imperialism. At given moments, when their contrasts with imperialism become particularly acute, these champions of "anti-imperialist" nationalism may go so far as to denounce the perverse effects of imperialist domination, and even take measures to contain it. But this has nothing to do with any **consistent** struggle against imperialism (once more, we only have to look at the conduct of the Iraqi regime in the Gulf War).

During this century, bourgeois anti-imperialism - and particularly the Afro-Asiatic revolutionary democracy which has been its most important expression - has generally shown itself to be incapable of completing the task it began: the industrialisation and capitalist modernisation of the ex-colonial countries. What's more, as a whole, its revolutionarism has followed a declining trajectory from **inconsequentiality** to **inconsistency**. Any decision today to place the struggle against imperialism into its hands would be the equivalent of accepting defeat right from the start.

It is for this reason that there is no way in which internationalist support for the uprising of the Middle Eastern **masses** in defence of the Iraqi people attacked by the allied coalition, could have transformed itself into support for the **regime** of Baghdad or for the Iraqi **state**, or into any delegation of the war against imperialism to the Saddam Husseins of this world. The various formulas of "military support" for the state of Iraq, or "victory to Iraq" (to the state of Iraq) and the like, can be considered as **anti-revolutionary** and bankrupt precisely because they attributed the Iraqi and Arab **bourgeoisie** with a **non-existent** capacity for effectively leading a *Jihad* against Western imperialism.

The Marxist position has been and has to be very different: **the struggle against imperialism must pass entirely into the hands of the proletariat and the oppressed masses!** There can no longer be any real, even partial, victory over imperialism without the extension and social radicalisation of revolutionary national uprisings. And the same goes for the overthrowing of Saddam or Khomeini-like regimes, if such an overthrow is to be a **step forward** towards the complete liberation of the exploited - and not a **step backwards** towards the reconsolidation of imperialist oppression.

The value of the anti-imperialist rebellion sparked off by the conflict between Iraq and the West can be summarised in this way: it was a first significant

step on the revolutionary road along which our class front will learn how to defeat the imperialist super-powers as well as the "national" bourgeoisies.

The way will be long and tortuous, we know. And we have certainly not hidden from ourselves the fact that the exploited masses who are ready to revolt in the Middle East nourish frightening illusions about the possibility that Saddam (or someone for him) is capable of concretely implementing his anti-imperialist proclamations. But **where** and **how** can the limitations of this mobilisation be overcome?

Our answer is that this can take place only **during the course of the struggle**, and only **here** in the West, in Europe, the heart of the imperialism which enslaves the whole of Islam; and only **with the entrance of the metropolitan proletariat into the battle**.

Unfortunately, the Western proletariat did not understand the significance of the conflict and the class interests at stake in the Gulf War. There was a spontaneous awakening (at least in Italy) at the moment hostilities began, which led to an overdue and weak petition for the preservation of "peace". But in front of the unleashing of imperialist aggression, the western proletariat remained **more or less totally immobile**, immobilized because of the attitude of a leadership which (by means of bourgeois-"worker" arguments) is being made an increasingly integral part of the piratical activities of their respective countries.

There were two sides to this immobility. It is true that it demonstrated an incapacity to aid Arab and Islamic class brothers in the Middle East (as well as in Europe where, with the war against Iraq, the capitalistic attack against proletarian immigrants has become more acute); but it also pressed an **unwillingness** to organise an anti-Arab mobilisation and to adopt the warmongering hysteria of the imperialist states and a good part of the middle classes.

If the war hadn't been so short, if the invading armies had suffered greater damage, perhaps a contradiction would have been opened between at least a **part** of the proletariat and the "reformist" organisations. This was not the case: but we are convinced that, both for the Arab-Islamic exploited masses and the European and American working classes, the experience of the war has **not been in vain**. One year later, the Western proletariat is finding that it has not gained any material or political benefit; on the contrary, it is now faced with a bourgeoisie that, in the wake of this infamous "victory", has become even more aggressive - to the point that it now claims the right to impose **internal** anti-proletarian diktats based on the models of the UN diktats to Iraq and Libya.

Our front lost (and badly) the Gulf War. We lost because, while imperialism was capable of setting up the "largest (counter-revolutionary) coalition in history", the two parts of the international proletariat involved in the war were incapable of even beginning to unite their forces. Nevertheless, the battle in the Middle East (and more generally) is still open; this is demonstrated on a

regional scale by the fact that the spectre of the insurrection of the Islamic masses which the West exorcised from "its" Kuwait has reappeared less than a year later both in Algeria (to the South) and in the ex-USSR (to the North).

The "Washington Post" itself recognised that imperialism *"still has a lot of work to do"* in the Middle East. But the imperialists will have a lot to do everywhere (in the East and the West, just as in the North and the South) if it is true that the bogging down of their system in a new and devastating historical crisis makes the world increasingly fraught with wars and revolutions.

For us, there will be no lack of future opportunities. We recognise that, at the moment, communist internationalism is isolated even from the "revolutionary *milieu*" itself, as was demonstrated by the lack of response we received to the letter sent at the end of 1990 to all of the organisations with which we are in correspondence. This did not surprise us, because we are aware of the **transitory** reasons for the blind indifference and irritation that even the "extreme left" feels for the movements of the "uncultured" and "fanatical" Islamic deaf masses. We would only remind the (too) many "revolutionaries" who remained "neutral" during the Gulf War in the name of so-called "pure" internationalism that, as Trotsky said, *"anyone who gives even their little finger to the demon of chauvinism is lost"*.

Perhaps this left is truly lost; and with it those forces which, from the "opposite" pole, refuse to draw up a class balance of the catastrophe of Stalinism. But our accounts are not based on survivors or nostalgia. What motivates us (and this is the reason for these translations) is an unshakeable belief in the absolute need for communism, in the recovery of an international proletarian movement, in the brotherhood of the exploited of all nationalities and colours - and in the not-distant flowering of a new generation of revolutionaries.

March 1992

ON THE SIDE OF THE EXPLOITED ARABS AND MUSLIMS AGAINST IMPERIALIST AGGRESSION

WHAT HAS LED TO THE CURRENT CRISIS

This edition of "Che Fare", almost exclusively dedicated to the war in the Gulf, aims at providing a materialist-historical examination of the current crisis in order to clarify the anti-capitalist duties of communists and the proletariat within the framework of the contradictions and material forces involved. The modesty of the means at our disposal makes it impossible for us to publish a newspaper in "real time". However, we are convinced that the inevitable *décalage* between the preparation and distribution of our journal, while it may not allow us to take the most recent events into consideration, does not affect the global significance of our analysis and our position. It is on these grounds that, unimpressed by the fact that we are not in line with the "mood" of even the "revolutionary" environment, we call upon anyone who refuses to enrol in the imperialist war and is attentive towards the reasoning and the programme of authentic proletarian internationalism.

The aggressor is the West

To arrive at the origins of the **more recent causes** of the confrontation in the Gulf, it is necessary to go back to the characteristics underlying the economic recovery of the 1980's. Against the dominant propaganda which described it as the beginning of a universal (and, in more than one case, a definitive) rebirth of capitalism, we have never tired of repeating that it could in no way be considered as anything like the beginning of a new cycle of development. We called it a **drugged** and **polarising** recovery; drugged by the war expenditure and national debt of the USA, and polarising because it

was achieved at the expense of the "Southern" world and by means of an unprecedented exploitation of the labour of the metropolitan working class. It was a recovery which exacerbated the antagonisms and inequalities of the capitalist system and so, in the final analysis, accentuated the factors of **instability** of social and political bourgeois domination. In "Che Fare" No.17, in the midst of the carnival of the triumph of capitalism over "communism", we wrote (forgive the long quotation):

*"It is true that the West has been able to put off, momentarily, the most unhinged passages of its crisis (of the capitalist system as a whole, not just of the West - note), but **only at the cost of accentuating its imperialist and capitalist nature to the utmost**; that is, its mechanisms of both **internal** and **external** exploitation. What are these costs, and what are the consequences?*

*Gripped in the vise of financial capitalism and the ruthless laws of the market, a growing proportion of the "Southern" world is already on its way to structural collapse and socio-economic chaos. Not only has the albeit unbalanced and unequal "development of under-development" been blocked, but a real **cycle of regression** has begun which hits even the **less** backward countries ...*

The age of (unequal) growth "for everybody" has come to an end. Trampling over norms, conventions and treaties (as well as national borders and defences) as if they were walls of waste paper, Western capitalism, strong in the superiority of its centralisation (and arms), is destroying every barrier which the Third World has somehow managed to construct against its expropriation, super-exploitation or pillage.

*The cyclone created by the first spasms of a crisis affecting the **whole** capitalist system is crossing (at very different speeds and degrees of violence) all of the countries controlled or dominated by imperialism. On the one hand, it destroys the fragile productive structures of young capitalist economies; on the other, it sucks resources towards itself (the West - note), ensuring that, after its passage, any "reconstruction" will be even more subordinate to the "centre". However, in this way, the West further (if possible -note) **attracts** towards itself and **enthrals** the "periphery", and increasingly exposes itself to **all of the** just **different kinds** of repercussion that this involves.*

*If (mistakenly) Latin America seems a long way away, we only have to look towards the Middle East. Economic crises, the exacerbation of class conflicts and the revolutionary struggle against imperialism have, since the Iranian insurrection, reciprocally reinforced each other **on an ever-larger scale**. While post-Khomeini Iran, as a bourgeois entity, appears to be prepared to attenuate the anti-imperialist struggle*

which the various ayatollahs and mullahs have never wanted to take to its final conclusion, the same cannot be said for the exploited Arabs and "Muslims". While the fire of the Palestinian Intifadah continues to burn, other fires are being rekindled in Algeria, Jordan and Egypt".

There is not a lot which needs to be added, except to say that, unlike the "Christians" and "pacifists", we have to be careful not to attribute all of this to the "egoism" or "blindness" of Western governments, or rather (according to the stereotype of an ideal Europe "different" from the USA), to the vocation of **only** the latter to international policing. Both of them finish by concentrating their criticisms "against" the USA (the main actor on the stage!) in the name of a so-called Christian, pacifist ... or European "alternative" (which is the same thing!). But what does this mean? Anybody lacking the brain, heart and blood to denounce the mechanisms which **determine** the current **joint** attack against the Arab masses (it is not an attack against Saddam Hussein, in fact, the true problem), cannot afford to pose as "different" or "alternative". More precisely, what are the **guiding forces** of the existing (**not casual but irreplaceable**) policy of **all** of the West (including Christians) towards the Middle East?

The West (that is, the companies, banks, governments and financial pirates which control the world) are **forced** to act as they do by the **laws** of the market and of profit of which they are only the ("intelligent") right arm. It is the mechanism of imperialist capitalism *per sé* which ensures that the strongest capitalism tends to concentrate and centralise **for itself** all of the available world resources by **blocking, distorting or attacking** the development of subjugated countries, **including those which are fully independent politically**.

Born as a reaction to the exhaustion of the post-war cycle of affluence, and in an attempt to postpone the consequences of all of the contradictions at the "heart" of the system, the Reagan recovery has simply accelerated the **times** and **methods** of the **permanent attack** of imperialist capital against the oppressed or dominated countries of the "periphery". (This is an integral part of the same war that the bourgeoisie is fighting against the metropolitan proletariat, even though - as we all know - this will not **immediately** take the form of a direct, bloody attack, but of the **involvement** of the proletariat in a "common front" against the exploited Arab masses in the name of "common" .. imperialist interests. It is not the case to make an immediate frontal attack against "their own" proletariat, but to tranquilise them and recruit them in **their own**. The frontal attack will arrive **later**, when the "*redde rationem*" will have sounded within the metropoli themselves, and when (if possible) the proletariat is already materially and morally **disarmed**).

In its uninterrupted offensive, the West has made use of the most various means: from high interest rates to the war for oil (and other materials) at zero cost; from complete destruction of entire national agricultures to the diplomatic

and financial boycotting of "unfavoured" countries; from the horrendous massacre of the Iran-Iraq war (which is certainly not only attributable to the bourgeois regimes of the belligerents) to its direct (not to mention indirect) military attacks in Central America and Africa. The conflict between Western imperialism and Iraq (with the USSR reduced to giving "conditional" support based on its own development needs which require Western capital, and **therefore** the security that there is a "peaceful" and "progressive" accumulation of this capital)¹, and that between the West and the exploited Arab-Muslim world, can be understood for what it really is only in the light of the needs and relationships dictated by the laws and course of international capitalism. The propaganda which presents it as the **effect** of the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait is nothing but mystification.

¹ We shall be returning to the position of the USSR subsequently. For now, we shall limit ourselves to some brief considerations. In "Che Fare" No. 15, we wrote about Gorbachev's "international fireman" activities. In the Gulf crisis, the USSR has made a further progress in its "alignment" to the West. This reduced commitment to the "anti-imperialist" national bourgeoisies was made necessary by the fact that the crisis in the USSR has by now made it impossible to sustain a "bipolar" confrontation with the West (the same goes for the West itself) and the USSR did not have in these countries a background of **imperialist** conquest (export of capital, etc.) to defend, but simply a series of bastions - either directly controlled (Europe) or usable, among a thousand ups and downs, as alliances (Middle East) - to set, both militarily and politically, against the crushing march of imperialism.

Having entered the West (as a camp of capital invasion) in a subordinate position, the USSR now needs investments and ... peace, if it is to get out of the blind alley. The possibility of obtaining the former (and to be able to negotiate them in some way) depends on the "peace" which the West **must** enjoy. The USSR thus finds itself also dependent upon this "peace", which means nothing other than hyper-exploitation and war being off-loaded elsewhere - in the turbulent Middle East, for a start..

This is the reason for the support interested in a **certain type** of normalisation, at least in the case of the conflict with Iraq, and the active participation of the USSR in a "fire-fighting, Act II" which has made a decided qualitative leap with respect to the past.

However, we must be careful not to put the action of the USSR on the same **level** as that of the USA (which is not to say that it is any **less** shameful): the USSR, **unlike** the USA, has neither the power nor the wish to appropriate directly the raw materials of the Middle East and, to a certain extent, is still contrary to a complete "normalisation" in the area - because this would end up as boomeranging against its own negotiating power ... in a sell-out.

Saddam's admonition tolls the bell for the USSR. The fact that nobody there listens to its tolling is of little importance; the future that lies in store will demonstrate the **actuality** of the discourse of the "madman of Baghdad".

If the **real interests** of the parties are considered (rather than the question of who moved the first tanks), it is clear that **the West is the real aggressor**, and that behind its past aggression against the Iran of Khomeini and the Libya of Ghedaffi, and today against its ex-ally, Saddam Hussein, there is a **counter-revolutionary offensive aimed at restoring the imperialist order in the Gulf (of oil!) which has been shaken by the Iranian uprising and the Intifadah which followed**. Not even the "peace" between Iraq and Iran was capable of establishing **social peace** in this area which is vital for the stability of metropolitan capitalism. The elimination of the miserable Sabah dynasty, far from being the fundamental cause of the present conflict, was only a small push to the **(already ripening)** advance of imperialist policies in the Gulf (and **throughout** the world) towards a "new" and more violent blackmail against the oppressed.

Iraq's "defensive" war

For what it's worth, recent events have provided a good example of how the "allied" Iraqi regime (which, in its own interests and those of the West, had previously been more than happy to offer itself as a type of breakwater against the spread of the "Islamic revolution") had itself become a centre of particular attention for the West. Why? Superficially, the bone of contention was the the so-called "super-cannon" - or rather the level of the armaments of third-party countries "permitted" by the great powers who are, in any case, already capable of destroying whatever they want to. In fact, the frictions between Iraq and the West were **much broader** and **all-encompassing**.

The imperialist pacification of the Middle East (defined by Bush as "*a thorn in the side of America*" a few months ago) and the guarantee of continuing access to oil sold at "sales prices" are objectives of such complexity that their achievement requires the complete cooperation of the bourgeoisie in the area ("Sadatisation", as it was described after the Camp David agreement). Iraq, however, **offered a certain degree of resistance** against imperialist pressures in an attempt **to preserve (for Iraqi capital) a certain margin of economic and political "autonomy" from the West**. This was the "crime" which the West, a good while before the annexation of Kuwait, couldn't forgive (the crimes against the Kurds or the exploited can be condoned by ... "international law").

Since the 1975 treaty with the Shah of Iran, Baa'thist Iraq had become an important area of investment for western capital of all types, as well as an inexhaustible source of demand for arms (also for the USSR). Furthermore, during the course of its war against Iran, the Baghdad regime had also instituted its own **mini-perestrojka**, initiating a policy of privatisation in the light engineering, food and construction industries, and a partial relaxation of state control over trade and prices. A policy of openness (*Intifah*: a sinister word in the history of the Arab world) which was pushed to such an extent that,

after the truce with Iran, "*attracted back into the country the investments of those rich old families which had been in exile since the 1958 revolution*" ("la Repubblica", 4 September). Nor did it refuse to place the enormous business of post-war reconstruction in the hands of the multinationals. Finally, when the lending banks asked the Iraqi government to institute a policy of mass austerity and increased productivity, they certainly didn't receive a "No" for an answer.

At the same time, however, Iraq refused to negotiate the restructuring of its enormous foreign debt in Paris (that is, in front of all of its **usurers combined**) and declared that it wanted to pursue bilateral negotiations. It also worked in OPEC, making use of its slow re-establishment of relations with Iran (on this aspect), to try to raise the price of oil. It continued to develop its programme of access to nuclear arms and provided providential support to the Arafat leadership of the PLO (on its knees, thanks to the total failure of its pro-Western diplomatic strategy).

This was enough to make the imperialist power-houses begin a series of intensive attacks which used Kuwait and the Emirates as **front-line saboteurs**, supported from a little further behind the curtains by Saudi Arabia. Baghdad's accusations that Kuwait, violating the production quotas established by OPEC, deliberately flooded the international oil market in order to bring down prices (an act which, as they rightly said, "*has the same effect as a military attack against Iraq*"), and violated existing *de facto* borders by annexing the oil fields in the area of Roumaila, are accusations which have never been denied. Left with its back against the wall, Iraq was **forced, as an "extreme defensive" measure** against the Western masters of the Emirate, to occupy Kuwait. "Iraq is the aggressor" was the furious cry of "our" greatest exponents of capitalist brigandage. But this is true only if one accepts the imperialist claim to the right to dispose of oil - in Arabia and in the rest of the world - and every other source of wealth as something of its own, in its own "vital interests"; only if it is considered "legitimate" that the **rentier** states and their satellites can freely starve the countries they dominate; only if the division and "Balkanisation" of the Middle East undertaken by the French and the British imperialism at the end of the First World War is considered untouchable.

Communists and the aware proletariat will not shed a single tear for the disappearance (hopefully definitive) of the artificial mini-state (imperialism's Trojan horse in the Arab world) or the band of rogues which administered it. We say more: if the troops of Baghdad had finished their lightning attack at Riyadh rather than Kuwait City, demolishing, albeit *à la Bonaparte* (something which, in the absence of better, doesn't disgust us at all), another and even more important pillar of imperialist domination, we would have rejoiced at an **objectively revolutionary** event.

Nonetheless, Saddam Hussein's policy of "defence" against imperialism is **not ours**. It is not ours because its **programme**, the **array of classes** proposing

it both **there** and **here**, and its **organisation** of the struggle (would that it were really, **as it isn't**, a pan-Arab or even pan-Islamic struggle) are not and cannot be those of the revolutionary proletariat.

The policy of Saddam Hussein and the two versions of Baa'thism in general ² (just as that of Nasser with which it is frequently compared), even in its most fighting version as a policy for "the rebirth of the entire Arab nation", is consistent (leaving apart the correspondence between words and facts) with the **bourgeois nature** of the Iraqi regime: **a policy for the development of capitalism in the Arab world**, an "independent", "unsqueezed" development towards what can be called an "equal share" of the world market, not subordinate to the West. Even when Saddam calls for a *Jihad* against the imperialist sacking of Islam (which is simply the sacrosanct truth!), the alternative he proposes is not the **only really liberatory** alternative of the revolutionary overthrow of the **capitalist system**, but the **fundamentally illusory and insubstantial** one of a "revolutionary" reform of the capitalist system in order to allow a **fairer** distribution of the world's resources. Even when he calls for the "*overthrow of corrupt Arab regimes, vassals of imperialism*", the perspective remains the same: capitalism, **a nation** (Christian or Islamic, there's no essential difference) which is "healthily" organised - **on the basis of the exploitation of wage labour ...** - and "free" from enfeoffment to the stronger capitalisms. The continuous and "surprising" **oscillations** between (even close) "collaboration" with imperialism and "war" against it, well expresses the **organic incapacity** of "revolutionary bourgeoisies" in general to strike **at the roots** of imperialism: this is something which can be done only by the proletariat - providing they accept the communist programme and act, not as a subordinate **national** class, but as **an international class fighting for its historic ends**.

The fact that there is a historically antagonistic difference in the class nature between Saddam-type "revolutionary" nationalism and the revolutionary

² We refer to the two main branches of the Baa'th movement (the Syrian and the Iraqi - which are not the only ones) which have been fighting between themselves for about a quarter of a century. The history of the Baa'th movement is a perfect example of the organic lack of consistency between pronounced programmes and political practice which characterises Arab nationalism and bourgeois "anti-imperialism" in general. This movement, which was born in Syria at the end of the 1940's and spread to other Arab countries (particularly Iraq and the Lebanon) over the following two decades, has only one clear point in its programme: the importance of nationalism and the unity of the Arab world. Despite this, the Baa'th movement has never managed to become a **real** supra-national (or pan-Arab) organisation. In power in Syria since 1963, and in Iraq since 1968, these two "sections" have remained in permanent confrontation (and are now on the threshold of armed conflict) despite the fact that, after a series of tormented events, it is the (highly state-oriented and militaristic) "left-wing" which has prevailed in both countries.

programme of communism does not mean that communists have an attitude of political **indifference** to the confrontation between imperialism and the new, young nations. What was written by the Marxist tendency of Amadeo Bordiga at the time of the first act of the bourgeois revolution in Iraq explains why:

*"The formation of national states is of no interest (...) to communists if it is seen as the end of a historical process, but as a **starting point** (our bold - note) for the development of the social energies suppressed by semi- feudalism. Communist revolutionaries **are interested** (our bold - note) in seeing proletarian forces growing everywhere; and so, while exposing the class content of the industrialisation programmes of the new Afro-Asian countries, they **are interested** (our bold - note) in ensuring that semi-feudal agrarian reaction - still strong in countries such as India, Pakistan, Persia, Iraq, the Sudan, etc. - and even the economic forms bound to primitive social structures (...) do not prevail over local regimes which tend towards the introduction of modern, albeit capitalist, forms of production".*

It must be clearly pointed out that this has nothing to do with "**Stalinist-type**" support for the bourgeois democratic parties in power in the ex-colonies; what is

*"important is not to block **the movement** (our bold - note) that tends towards the liquidation of those semi-feudal or tribalistic remains which prevent any significant advances of the economy or social structures".*

It is for these reasons that "Il programma comunista" *, No. 1 (1959), said

*"we welcomed with satisfaction last July's popular revolt that put an end to the Hashemite dynasty, **the traditional instrument of British imperialism and the agent of local landowners** (our bold - note)".*

Equally, **without any confusion with bourgeois political forces**, Marxists

*"cannot fail to recognise that Nasser's programme for a single Arab state that would put an end to the "Balkanisation" of the Middle East, from which only imperialism gains any advantage, **responds to a real***

* Organ -from 1952- of the group with which Bordiga continued his battle in defence of revolutionary communism.

It is still published under the same name, but its approach is now very different from that of Bordiga.

historic need (our bold - note). A great, single Arab state (which, not by chance, Nasser could not construct - note) *would exacerbate the permanent crisis of imperialism but would not, on account of its age, be able to resist against the workers' revolutionary wave unleashed in the metropoli of imperialism*".

Today, *mutatis mutandis* but, unfortunately, with a long way still to go, lacking - **here is the fundamental question!**- "*Bolshevik-type parties which can provide the movement in the ex-colonies with proletarian leadership, in the absence of a revolutionary proletarian struggle in the metropoli*", it is for the same reasons that we welcome with satisfaction the cancellation of the Kuwait Emirate: its socio-economic and political significance. We welcome it not as a point of arrival in the formation of the Iraqi nation (itself a victim in the past of imperialist usurpation), but as a **starting point** for a **real movement** of the **proletarian and exploited Arab and Muslim** masses which will be catalysed by the international conflict surrounding the question of Kuwait and which, **by directing itself against imperialism**, will reawaken the metropolitan working class by shaking the material bases of its existing political insignificance. That is, a starting point for the only real movement which, by bringing closer together the two "extremes" of the international front of the exploited and by making the proletariat truly aware of its historical tasks, can **once and for all**, by means of the proletarian revolution, put an end not only to this or that **effect** of the system of imperialist domination, but to the **system itself**.

The rebellion of the exploited Arabs and "Muslims"

Western aggression, then; and a "defensive" war on the part of Iraq. However, the "punishment" of the Iraqi regime is not the final objective of Western capitalism. Although passing by way of the siege and, if necessary, even a full-blown war against Iraq, the **real target** of the Western attack is the struggle of the proletariat and the disinherited of the Arab-Islamic world (and of the entire "periphery"). The imperialist powers have still not settled their accounts with the Iranian insurrection of 1979. It is true that the West has managed to stop the **international and communist trans-growth** of the revolutionary movement initiated in Iran, but it has not been able to prevent the anti-imperialist rebellion of the exploited classes of the Middle East ("ideally" Islamic or otherwise) from spreading far beyond the borders of Iran and affecting precisely those countries which were encouraged and armed in order to provide a pro-Western and pro-perestrojka **dyke** (and Saddam knows something about that) against the "Islamic tide". Consequently, imperialism has found it increasingly **necessary** to strike not only the trans-growth of the "Iranian" movement in a communist sense, but rather the Middle

Eastern anti-imperialist movement as a whole - which risks becoming the fuse for a proletarian revolutionary process that will be considerably more dangerous than that ignited under the "everlasting" throne of the Shah.

Beginning with the untamed Palestinian *Intifadah* against Israel, almost every corner of the Middle East and Muslim Africa has been the theatre of popular rebellions and acute class struggles. It is not just a question of the **number** of the exploited who have set themselves in motion; the West has understood the difficulties of its position as a result of a complex of changes taking place in the **struggle of the masses** and in the **relationships between states** (the latter being connected to, and partially influenced by the former), both of which offer signs of a forthcoming storm.

More than anything else, there is the incessant proliferation of Islam- inspired movements (which express a basic instancy of **unification of forces** deriving from the poor working masses) and the growing attraction, in this universe, of plebian factions (despite the enormous support given by Saudi Arabia to the more conservative and sectarian integralist tendencies opposed to "Islamic populism"). Secondly, there is the gradual coming together of the "integralist" and "anti-integralist" masses (promptly brought to the attention of Bush by our "hunchback") and that of the Islamic organizations, the more traditionally "left-wing" movements and the albeit fragile Trade Union movement. Thirdly, there is the tangibly greater presence of on the social and political scene of an industrial proletariat, with strikes in Egypt, Algeria, Turkey and Palestine (where, after the massacre of the proletariat at the "slave market", there was the first general strike **directly** controlled by trade union organisations) ³. Fourthly, there is a widespread and general indignation over the influx of Russian Jews (attributed to American pressure rather than the political connivance of Gorbachev) and over the American decision to interrupt official diplomatic relations with the PLO.

Torn between the economic and political *diktats* of imperialism and the growing anger of the exploited classes, the Arab bourgeoisies have retreated in front of the former and used the iron fist against the latter (as can be seen by the Algerian massacres). And this despite the fact that, in a framework of a profound economic crisis and an explosive mixture of social and political contradictions, this surrender has only increased the **instability** and threatens

³ On the morning of 20 May, an Israeli soldier slaughtered 7 Palestinian workers who were waiting in the hope of finding employment in what is significantly called "the slave market". In response to this odious massacre, there was an explosion of protest in Gaza, Trans-Jordan, Jordan, the Lebanon and even within Israel. For the first time since the beginning of the *Intifadah*, a general strike was called not by the united Command but by the Palestinian Trade Union organisations (which, over the last few months, have gone through a process of reunification that has increased their political weight in the Palestinian and Arab liberation movement).

the very **survival** of a number of regimes - including national-revolutionary regimes such as that of Algeria, and consistent degenerated heirs of the FLN at the same time.

The sudden rise of Saddam to the position of leader of the defence of the "Arab nation" (which means the conquest of an "autonomous" market space for Iraqi and Arab capital carved out in the face of unacceptable Western claims) summarises and expresses that minimal anti-imperialism that the Arab bourgeoisie cannot avoid, and which is permanently regenerated by continuous imperialist oppression. It also represents an attempt to exploit to his own advantage the claims of ransom of the working classes as a **subaltern component** of the national front.

The more combative element of the exploited Middle Eastern peoples respond with enthusiasm to Saddam's appeal for a "holy war" against imperialism, seeing in it the **vain** prospect of a fully-fledged war of emancipation from imperialism in which it is prepared to put all of its energies. It is this which is the new point of departure for a movement of revolt which, in order to fulfill its most profound expectations, will have to spread and pass over the heads of its current bourgeois leadership; and in order to spread, **it needs our complete solidarity**. The interest of the metropolitan proletariat is that the anti-imperialist war of the oppressed Arabs and Muslims releases all of its (albeit not immediately communist) revolutionary potential: the more this is the case, the greater will be the disruption of that "social peace" which means only the exploitation and oppression of the working class on the part of capital. And the higher the cost that the West has to pay for its new imperialist crusade, the weaker it will leave the capitalist system as a whole and the international socialist perspective, the only one capable of ensuring the liberation from capitalist oppression of the proletariat of all nationalities, will be facilitated.

(from "Che Fare", No.19, September-October 1990)

THE WEST GOES TO WAR: OBJECTIVES, PROPAGANDIST REASONS, INTER-BOURGEOIS CONTRADICTIONS

There is, so to say, an **immediate** and "**regional**" objective to the Gulf war: control over the amount and price of oil supplies to the West, and the "normalisation" of the Middle East. However, at the same time, the crisis is also the **prologue** to a much wider long-term war where what is at stake is of **historical and world-wide** dimensions: if the bourgeois win, it will mean a "new **capitalist and imperialist** international order"; if the winners are the proletariat and the oppressed masses, it will mean the establishment of the **World Commune**. In addition to being a war between the "North" and the "South", it is also a war **within the North** (between predatory capitalisms) and **within the South** (between the bourgeois and petit-bourgeois classes who are disputing the "vital spaces" in which they can, in some way, stabilise their precarious regimes), and a **class conflict** between exploiters and exploited (as much in the metropoli as in the dominated countries) interwoven with unresolved questions of national self-determination.

A result of the complication and exacerbation of all of capital's contradictions and antagonisms (as well as being, in itself, a multiplying factor of these contradictions and antagonisms), the battle for the Gulf marks a **qualitative leap in the imperialist oppression** of the Middle East region. The old, ex-colonial powers, with the Yankee super-power at their head, have "returned" **armed** to the Arab world. It is well known that the military withdrawal of European imperialism from the Arab world (at enormous cost to the ex-colonial peoples) was brought about by the revolutionary movements of national liberation. But it must also be said that, in this process of liberation from the **old** colonialism, the United States played an ... anti-imperialist role - because of its interests in expelling the old masters and replacing them with the resources of its **spanking new** financial and gunboat colonialism (*simul stabunt*). The half-hearted anti-imperialism of the national bourgeoisies thus removed a given

group of people and a given **form** of imperialist domination, but was neither able nor willing to oppose this new and superior form. **This is the task which must be faced today.**

Throughout a complete historical phase, this new and stronger imperialist master (aided by the inconsequential nature of the "revolutionary" bourgeoisies) has made use of its financial supremacy to prevent any "independent" strengthening of young capitalisms throughout the world. Now that the historical crisis of the capitalist system is becoming to come to a head, imperialist capital can do nothing else than to intervene **directly** wherever it is faced by any **direct** (even if localised) threat to its dominion. And this is even truer in an area as strategically important as the Gulf. We have already seen this in the naval expedition against Iran, and it is now being repeated with an array of forces at a "suddenly" very different level (by the end of September, the American expeditionary corps in Saudi Arabia will be almost as great as the entire allied forces on D-Day in Normandy!).

This **will not be a short-term** military intervention. The American proposals for the establishment of a new NATO for the Middle East along the lines of the notorious "Baghdad Pact" (or rather the insistence of all of the imperialist powers on the need to install a mechanism of "**permanent** security" in the area, even after the "resolution" of the current crisis) are explicit on this point; the social-democratic and pacifist eyewash concerning the need to establish a new relationship of "peace" and "cooperation" between the "North" and the "South" is worth nothing more than a bent penny. Yes, it is true that "national" and state economies are **interdependent** on the world market; but, under the capitalist system, this interdependence has never meant (and never will mean) "cooperation" among "equals", no more than the "interdependence" of capital and labour can be anything other than exploitation. Yes, world capitalism is a single system; but it is made up of **unequal parts**. According to Lenin, the imperialist phase of capitalism divides the world "*into a **small group of usurer states and an immense mass of debtor states***"; and the first defend their imperialist "right" to rob the second by means of what, in the final analysis, is nothing other than the **violence** of "gunboat diplomacy" - which will be overcome only when the capitalist system itself is destroyed. The armed "return" of the West to the Middle East is an attempt to keep the exploited masses in the grip of its talons (an attempt historically condemned to inevitable failure).

The dominant lies

The piratical substance of the West's military intervention is, as always, shrouded by the seven veils of revolting mystification.

The West is present in the Gulf in order to defend "little Kuwait" from

being brutalised by the Iraqi ogre. However, the court criers conveniently omit to mention the colonial interests and intrigues which led to the carving up of the Middle East in the first place. How was it that Kuwait became a "state"? Was it the result of the "pressure" of a distinct and separate Kuwaiti "nation" or "people" - or the result of hasty deliberations in London and Washington aimed at protecting the Anglo-Persian Oil Company and the Gulf Oil Corporation? How is it that these generous protectors of the weak (fresh from - at least - their complicity in the invasions of Grenada and Panama) can begin their highly humanitarian work by explaining to the undeniably oppressed Palestinian masses that they have been "sent back to go" because they dared to demonstrate their aversion to imperialism? And how is it that the tormented Kurds have received nothing but words from the power-houses of imperialism? The West is in the Gulf - and will, we are told, have to visit the greater part of the Third World - in order to oppose and punish the many "little Hitlers" that prosper there. Enough with these barbarous dictators!

It is not for us to deny that there are ferocious **bourgeois** dictators (normally **sworn vassals of the West**) in these places. But what will be put in their place? What else if not the **direct** dominion of imperialist "democracy"? And what would be the policy of these new democratic crusaders if the exploited masses were to establish their own "revolutionary" democracies? Is there any doubt that they would be treated in the same way as the Nicaraguan masses, suffocated by an economic blockade and civil war financed by the leading democracy in the world, precisely because of having freed themselves from a bloody *comprador* bourgeois dictatorship that was its own "long arm"?

The defenders of Israel; the Mitterand who, as a Minister of colonial France, once said that, "*The only negotiations with Algeria should be war*"; the American administration which, with its invasion into Lebanon of 1958, sowed the seeds of the total destruction of the country (the ground having been prepared by the French and their abominable religious "cantons") in order to defend a prevaricatory clique; the protectors of Hussein of Jordan, the butcher of "Black September"; the suppliers and instigators of the slaughter between Iran and Iraq - all of them announce that their presence in the Middle East is to ensure the end of "inter-Arab" disagreements and to "teach the Arabs the culture of peace" and how to peacefully resolve their differences. There is no need to respond to the lackeys of the "civilised" States which have flayed alive the masses of the oppressed countries; it only remains to be said that the prevarications of the pre- bourgeois and bourgeois Arab **regimes** against the **exploited** must and can only be confronted by the exploited masses themselves, through the overthrow of their respective governments and the establishment of a Federation of the soviets of the proletariat and the oppressed of the Middle East. It is only in this way, with the work of generations and the support of a Western proletariat shaken out of its current hypnosis, that the ill-omened inheritance of the artificial divisions left by the imperialists

can be overcome.

It is also said that this intervention in the Gulf is a punishment against one of the "great oil-lords". The regimes of Saddam and Ghedaffi are "militarised oil-ocracies"; by dismantling them, the West claims to be acting in the interests of everybody - particularly the poorest. The ineffable Ronchey (an Italian "opinion maker" - note) even went so far as to quote the theory of value *"in order to measure the difference between the parasitic income and the profit of today's industrialised West"*: in substance, to justify to the workers and a certain type of "Marxist" (why else the reference to Lenin?) that any attack against the beneficiaries of *"excess oil income"* is anything but wrong. What's more, in *"l'Unità"* (August 17), F. Cerutti concluded along the same lines by explaining that more petrol in the hands of Saddam Hussein or Ghedaffi does not mean *"more milk for the babies of the South"*.

It is not for us to explain to the likes of Ronchey that, despite the recognition of the historically progressive function of capitalism in comparison with previous forms of production (but not, of course, that of imperialism in comparison with the "backwardness" of the dominated countries), this opposition of good profits and evil revenues (or rather, between acceptable and excessive income) is not Marxism but a revisionist and bourgeois vulgarity. What is Marxism is the scientific thesis that it is the profit-based social system itself which should be suppressed, to put a definitive end to **all** forms of parasitism on the backs of living labour.

We object that: 1) the leadership of the "militarised oil-ocracies" is to be found **here** in the West, the supposed "liberator" of oil revenues; 2) the greatest part of oil revenues (ever heard of "petro-dollars"?) has been scooped up by Western countries, banks and multinationals for their own benefit; 3) the Western war machine is in the Gulf to protect precisely those Arab states (Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the UAE) which, more than any others, have transferred their oil revenues to the West, the main starving of the South; 4) consequently, it is only the exploited Arab classes, once again rising up against imperialism, who can and must settle their accounts with their own bourgeoisies (concerning revenues, milk ... but **even and above all power**), including those who set themselves up as leaders of their liberation.

The West against the West

Although the imperialist powers are truly united in their attack against the people of the Middle East and against their own "internal enemy", the crisis in the Gulf marks **a further step in the interimperialist struggle for the redivision of the world market**. While this struggle has never stopped (not even during the period of maximum "detente" and uncontrasted American domination), the progressive weakening of the USA, the "strategic withdrawal"

of the USSR and the total dissolution of the "socialist" bloc have made it even more acute. The end of so-called bipolarism, after the Stalinist demobilisation of the proletarian revolution, does not (despite the ravings of Occhetto and Ingrao) * open the doors to a "world government" capable of peacefully resolving all national and social conflicts, but goes in **the opposite direction**. An American government spokesman has declared that,

"We are not sending our boys to get killed in the desert just so that the Germans and Japanese can fill up their tanks more easily".

And we don't doubt it. Foster Dulles, America's ex-Secretary of State, once admitted: *"The USA doesn't have friends, only interests"*.

Absolutely true: just like **all** of the imperialist powers who, while hiding behind the "values" of "peace", "democracy", "civilisation" or what have you, do nothing but pursue their own interests of robbery and oppression. The "friends" of the EEC had no problem in refusing Washington's request that they share the costs of "Desert Shield" ...

In the war in the Gulf, every imperialist state primarily supports the interests of its own capitalism by establishing (changeable) alliances with other imperialist states according to the advantages that they can derive from them. The massive display of American forces in Saudi Arabia is also **against** the gradual "peaceful" penetration in the Gulf of its two most dangerous competitors: Germany and Japan. Vice versa, the absence of Germany and Japan from the scene is only apparent. Germany, whose interests in the Middle East have always been in contrast with those of the older major colonialist powers, has often looked for, and sometimes received, the sympathy of the "Arab nation" (a long time before Mussolini, it was Wilhelm II who offered himself as "Protector of the Muslims" against French and British oppression); now that it has a number of differences with the USA, it insists (and not by chance) on becoming the point of contact for Euro-Arab "dialogue". Japan, pushed by Bush to share in the expenses (it is worth noting that the American administration has never asked - at least, not with conviction - for a larger contingent of Euro- Japanese troops; only for greater political and financial coverage for its **own** army), protested that it could not be the "cash dispenser" of .. the Pentagon, and mockingly decided to contribute to the expenses .. by sending medicines and "humanitarian" aid to Egypt, Turkey and Jordan (thus taking countries from both fronts under its wing). If Great Britain is in the front line with its troops, this is in "honour" of the City, badly hit by the Iraqi annexation of Kuwait; if Italy is in the rear, this is because of its traditional duplicity in

* The former is Secretary and the latter the leader of the "left" inside the PDS (the Partito Democratico della Sinistra), the party born out of the transformation of the Italian Communist Party (PCI).

dealing with two opposing fronts (there should be no illusion about its greater benevolence towards the oppressed Arabs!) - a policy which, up to a certain point, was also followed by the Fascists. Nor is the USSR victim of any "anti-imperialist" resipiscence when it pushes as hard as it can for a "political solution" to the crisis. It is part of the complementary and covering forces of the West's attack against the exploited peoples of the "South" and offers its unreserved support to strangulatory resolutions of the UN; it is just that it would prefer the victory of the West to be achieved, as far as possible, without an immediate plunge into the abyss of war. It has been pushed to this point by its desperate need for the time and capital necessary for restructuring its ravaged economy and tamponing its explosive social contradictions.

The war against the exploited of the Middle East is, then, part and parcel of a no-holds-barred conflict between the great capitalist powers that will decide **whether** the Western protectorate over the area and its oil should be adjusted in one way or another, and which countries, banks or companies should receive what share of the profits. L. Caligaris, one of the Italian government's military advisers, made this quite clear when he called for a greater, directly military commitment to the war:

"When the crisis is over, recalling the commitment of each one of them, the USA, France and Great Britain will redesign the map of the subdivision of roles (i.e. treasure - note) and, with it, the list of the "deferential" or "influential" countries, regardless of their economic or political potential", ("Corriere della Sera", 9 September).

If "we, too" want to share in the division of the spoils, we must accept the corresponding responsibilities and risks of war.

This is real capitalism. Not a "super-imperialism" capable of uniting the strongest capitalisms one with the other, and archiving the inter-imperialist war; rather, the "usual" knife-fight between capitalisms, fought **at the expense of the proletariat**, and aimed at a redivision of the world market which will, in the final analysis, be decided by force. The end of the so-called Cold War opens a new historical phase of bitter conflict, the final result of which will be one of two alternatives: imperialist war or socialist revolution. This transition was eloquently announced by the directive of the Economic Ministers of the EEC: " **'War' economy against Saddam**".

This war affects all proletarians: it is a war against our super-exploited and disinherited class brothers of the Arab-Islamic world; it is a war against the proletariat as a whole. The communist reply is: **Break the internal front! Relaunch the struggle against capitalism! Unconditionally support the struggle of the peoples oppressed by imperialism! Transform the imperialist war into a class war!**

(From "Che Fare", No.19, September-October 1990)

THE SECOND ROUND OF THE ANTI-IMPERIALIST REVOLUTION IN THE ARAB-MUSLIM WORLD

The crisis in the Gulf is destined to leave a deep scar on an Arab world which is **profoundly different** from that of the "anti-imperialist revolutions" of the 1950's and 1960's, the age of Nasserism.

Between the two, there has been:

- **a first cycle of capitalist development in the Arab-Islamic area** which (although obstructed, distorted and as dependent upon imperialism as much as you like) has led to its division and stratification into **two** different and divergent **modern** "nations". As a consequence, that part of Arab society which is deaf or hostile to the struggle against imperialist aggression and domination is no longer limited to the Sheiks and Emirs, the courts of Farouk, Idris and Feisal, etc., or the old pre-bourgeois landowning and merchant classes. It has **grown** to include the newly created bourgeois and even petit-bourgeois classes. Secondly, the **centre of gravity** of the struggle against imperialism has increasingly shifted **towards the (small) proletarian and the (enormous) disinherited semi-proletarian masses.**

- **the substantial blocking and inversion of this development**, which has highlighted the inconsistency of "revolutionary" bourgeoisies incapable of fully developing the bourgeois-democratic revolution and, consequently, of pursuing their political and military successes over the old colonialism by creating a real emancipation from an imperialist domination which has, in the meantime, moved on to a **superior form** of organised robbery.

- **the cause** and (at the same time) **effect** of this blocking of the Arab national revolutionary movement is **a certain recovery on the part of those imperialist countries which were more directly hit** after the end of the Second World War **by the process of decolonisation**, and the unleashing of a wide-ranging offensive on the part of the central powers of the world capitalist system aimed at obtaining ever-greater profit margins by crushing the countries they dominate. Part of the responsibility for this lies with the complete bankruptcy of historical Stalinism and the disappearance of the "socialist bloc" which, for a certain period of time, provided newly independent countries with

a useful "breakwater" against the brutal pressure of metropolitan capital.

- **the exhaustion of the cycle of revolutions which received impetus "from above"** (Egypt, Syria, Libya) or which were (more or less) rigidly organized "from above" by the leadership of nationalist organisations (the Algerian FLN, the Iraqi Baa'th) and which denied the exploited classes of any room for independent action, and **the beginning of a cycle of popular uprisings and insurrections** which have, in practice, overridden and sometimes accused and attacked the old "revolutionary" nationalist leaderships.

- **the decline of historical pan- Arabism** (Nasserism), partly because of the increasingly marked shift of Egypt into the American and Western orbit, and partly because of the repeated failure of all of the attempts to put the albeit embryonal programme of the united Arab state into practice; and **the rise of Islamism**, heavily marked in a **plebian** sens (à la Khomeini, Hamas, Hezbollah, etc.) and capable of - **demagogically** - relaunching the question of the "anti-imperialist" unity of the oppressed of the Muslim world beyond national borders and beyond the division between Arab and non-Arab Muslims.

These profound changes are an expression of the fact that the Arab-Islamic world, **still oppressed by Imperialism despite the end of old- style colonialism**, is ripe for a **continuation** of a bourgeois-democratic revolution against new forms of imperialist domination which materially involves **the exploited classes and the proletariat to a much greater extent than "local" bourgeoisies**: a second round of the bourgeois revolution which is **objectively closer to trans-growth into the world proletarian revolution**. It is certainly not by chance that the vast majority of the Arab bourgeoisie is today ranged against the Iraqi "brother" and (sometimes covertly, for the sake of prudence) in favour of imperialist intervention.

Why is Saddam Hussein a point of reference?

If all this is true, why is it that the exploited Arab and Islamic masses come together around such "figures" as Saddam (or the Khomeini of yesterday) and movements which are neither ideologically nor programmatically proletarian? Why do they respond to Saddam's appeal for a "holy war" against imperialism, couched in half-nationalist (albeit "area" nationalist) and half- religious terms, while they don't respond to appeals for a war against the capitalist system expressed in the correct terms of class?

The reason is very simple: the only **class** capable of launching such an appeal through its own party organisation, the metropolitan working class, is **at the moment**, a **political nonentity**, and its political organisation (be it the SPD, PCI, PCF or the Labour Party - but the same is substantially true for the "ex-Communist" parties of the East) is **completely dedicated to defending imperialist capitalism** - although it sometimes (but increasingly weakly) justifies

the fact in terms of the immediate interests of the workers.

If the young Arab working class (such as that of Iran) finds it difficult to take on an independent political role among the disinherited which is distinct from that of bourgeois revolutionary nationalism and Islamism, the fundamental cause of this weakness is **not local**: it is the general weakness of the international proletariat, **particularly** that of the strongest, most concentrated and expert proletariat of the "centre".

We have at our backs - and we feel its weight - **the long counter-revolutionary cycle** which allowed the bourgeoisie (with the determinant complicity of Stalinism) to break the proletarian revolutionary movement on two fronts: defeating (and partially corrupting) it in Europe; and breaking the tie between the proletariat of the imperialist countries and the oppressed peoples' anti-imperialist insurrectionary movement.

The grandiose strategic prospect of world revolution outlined by the Third International was **entirely dismantled by Stalinism**. The conclusion of the Third International was that the defeat of international capitalism as a single system is possible only by means of the **union**, or **fusion** of the struggles of all of the oppressed and exploited in the world: the revolutionary struggle for socialism in the "centre" and the anti-feudal, anti-imperialist national wars in the "periphery". Under the guidance of the metropolitan working class and its programme for communism, the proletarian West and the peasant East must come together in a single international soviet movement - as was said at the Baku Congress - within which the struggle against national oppression would take on a worldwide significance and could find the only **non-illusory, non-formal, non-precarious** outlet for the definitive overthrow of capitalistic social relationships. Conscious of the extreme complexity of this process, caused by the inequalities in capitalist development and the opportunistic burden of the **practice** (if not yet, in many ways the **theory**) of the Second International, Lenin's International placed particular emphasis on the internationalist responsibilities of metropolitan Communist Parties as far as the national revolutionary movement was concerned. Both the development of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in the backward countries and the possibility-necessity of stripping its leadership from bourgeois and petit-bourgeois hands in the name of the international proletariat, depended - and they were not tired of repeating the fact - on the full and complete fulfillment in **practice** of the tasks of solidarity and support for the struggle of the oppressed peoples against imperialism.

This strategic plan, which **still remains, and more than ever** the strategic plan for the proletarian revolution, was disfigured and overthrown by Stalinism. The unitary international revolutionary process was blocked, broken and dragged to defeat, **because it was put back into the hands of the bourgeoisie both at the "centre" and in the "periphery"**. Neither the class struggle nor the revolution could be cancelled; but, in the dominating countries, the first was

confined to the social- democratic (and social-imperialist) redistribution of incomes, and in the dominated ones the second to narrow nationalist borders.

This long process of degeneration has, of course, also left its mark in the Arab world. At the beginning of the 1920's, **in conditions of objective immaturity**, the communist movement was established there mainly as a minority-projection of the European "colonial" proletariat, neither very "indigenous" (although this is not true for Persia and Turkey) nor very ... "responsive" to the internationalist directives of Moscow, or on the initiative of groups of mainly Jewish intellectual militants. There was, then, a weakness from the beginning. But the echo of the October revolution arrived even here, and "inspired" a number of small groups of native proletarians in Egypt, Syria, Tunisia and Iraq (although only in the case of the Algerian Etoile Nord-Africaine was it of any significance) to turn to "communism". But the counter-revolution had already begun, and the "stuff" of Stalinist "communism" was revealed for what it was when, in all of the French and British colonial countries, the "supreme" task of the anti-Nazi/Fascist struggle was to **block** both the social and the anti-imperialist struggles, degrading the local "communist" forces to the role of water-bearers for the imperialist democracies. The subsequent "ransom" of these forces (where they continued to survive) occurred when they aligned themselves, increasingly less conditionally, to the cause of bourgeois nationalism - which logically led, in more than one case, to their formal dissolution.

The picture didn't change, even in the years of the full development of the Arab nationalist movement. The "anti-imperialism" of Brezhnev's USSR, unlike during the "heroic" times of Stalinism, was no longer even concerned with the formation of "communist" parties in the ex-colonies; and the same was true for the "anti-imperialism" of the European parties, except for the fact that they tended to have a "Westernising" effect on their increasingly insubstantial "brother" parties which led to them being criticised by the more militant nationalists. Since the end of the Second World War, the European proletariat has not given much direct support to the bourgeois-democratic revolution in the Arab-Islamic area: **at most** (and with many minusses) its struggles have **objectively** offered only a certain amount of oxygen to the anti-imperialist movement, but when and where has it gone further than expressing neutrality towards it? And what kind of "support" has it given even in those exceptional cases which have normally concerned the colonies of **the others**? Perhaps a support to the full development of the bourgeois revolution? Or an aid towards the self-liberation of the exploited from the cage of the national fronts under the hegemony of the bourgeoisie?

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that, so far, the rebellion of the exploited Arabs against imperialist domination has coagulated around the figure of Saddam. But **which Saddam**? Like the majority of the bourgeois regimes in dominated countries, Saddam and the Baa'thists have a **number of different**

faces: alternatively "revolutionary" or accommodating towards imperialism; oppressive against national minorities and, of course, always reactionary towards socialism. Which of these faces is the one that has inflamed the spirits of the Arabs in the street, from Mauretania to as far away as Bangladesh? The face of the Iran-Iraq massacre? The face of the ruthless persecution of PKI militants (**a direct continuation, in this respect, of the British colonialist line**)? Or the face represented by the forced deportation or extermination of the Kurds? In our opinion, none of these. The spirits of the disinherited and exploited Arab- Islamic masses have been inflamed by something very different: **the initial challenge against imperialism, and then the appeal for an anti-imperialist holy war.** It is the cancellation of a "state" in the pay of **imperialism**, and nothing else, which has led even the poor of Tehran to dance in the streets for joy.

Having said this, and having recognised that Saddam has a certain ability and audacity, does not influence at all our judgement of him or the "revolutionary" bourgeoisie. As is the case with all of the other leaders of the national Arab bourgeoisie, Saddam **will be (as he is at the moment) incapable** of putting his proclamations into practical effect because any anti-imperialist "*jihad*", **really carried out to the end**, would have such a disruptive effect on **both** Islam and the metropoli as to threaten the stability of the entire capitalist system -including the "Arabic national" capitalism of which Saddam is the expression and "Defender". And so? What interests us is that the **explosiveness of the Middle Eastern situation** Saddam's Iraq has forced to raise the those questions which directly affect the huge exploited Arab-Islamic masses which, encouraged by the current confrontation, have begun to move towards a real anti-imperialist war; that is, a war which will lead to a real understanding of their strength and of their antagonistic class interests.

But bourgeois "anti-imperialism" cannot be consistent

Above all, it is precisely this **extension** and the **radicalisation** of the struggle against imperialism, as well as against those feudal and bourgeois classes which are subject to imperialism in the Middle East (**two struggles in one**), which will allow the Arab proletariat and semi-proletariat to get rid of the Saddams and their **inevitable impotence** - an impotence which could, in the case of an extreme precipitation of the class struggle, turn itself into a direct confrontation with the revolutionary movement. Bourgeois "anti-imperialism" is regularly pushed towards positions of mediation, conciliation and **yielding to imperialism** (insofar as these seem to guarantee it an - albeit subordinate - autonomy) and towards an opposite stiffening against the "exaggerations" of the exploited masses. This was seen in the case of Khomeini, who **proclaimed**

the revolutionary struggle of "*all of the Islamic world*" against the Great Satan but, in practice, was incapable of **doing anything concrete** beyond those limits which acted as a check against any real and universal mobilisation of the masses (and this was already true **within Iran itself**). In the first place, this was because, for his social structure, Khomeinism **don't believe** in this possibility; secondly, because any spontaneous mobilisation of this kind would directly threaten the basis of his power which was incompatible with any **real** liberation from the cage of a nation or state (that is the typical apparatus of any bourgeois domination - however "anti-imperialist"). The "anti-imperialism" of Saddam is made of the same stuff.

In any case, this is clear from the lack of follow-through of his own proclamation of the "*jihad*".

If - within the limits of the elements at our disposal - we make a first check concerning the crucial point of the organisation of the exploited masses in terms of the war against imperialism, it is clear that Saddam's Iraq has made no attempt even to begin **their general armament**. Even the initial accusations of the West that Iraq was arming the numerous "Palestinian community" in Kuwait have been allowed to drop. Despite its proclamations, Saddam's Iraq is **not** establishing a real militia of the exploited - the only type of organisation which would be capable of making the enormous revolutionary potential of the oppressed Arab-Islamic masses felt, and which would provide, in Kuwait City, the best "local" guarantee against the return of the Sabah dynasty, even in the case of the withdrawal of Iraqi troops or of temporary military defeat.

It is also indicative that the so-called enrolment of volunteers outside Iraq was **stopped** as soon as it was launched. In Jordan, Palestine and the Yemen, as well as (to a lesser extent) in Algeria and Libya, there was an immediate and often enthusiastic mass response to the Iraqi appeal. In Jordan, in particular, Jordanians (of Bedouin origin) and Palestinians, not to mention Egyptians, etc., came together to create a first real embryo of unity in the war against imperialism, which went far beyond the disastrous (for them) divisions and rivalries of the past. But - and certainly not for any lack of willingness on the part of the masses - their "enrolment" consisted only in putting themselves at the disposition of the Iraqi Army Command in case of necessity; that is, signing a form and **waiting for orders from above**. The Iraqi government has certainly not pressed for the effective organisation of volunteer committees, their arming or the arming of the people in allied countries; nor has it done anything towards the creation of an effective **united** popular Arab army. Typical: on the one hand, the national bourgeoisie proclaims the "*jihad*" of the oppressed countries against imperialism; on the other, it goes to war (certainly trying to capitalise on the anti-imperialist hatred of the exploited in favour of the "nation") maintaining and even strengthening the police apparatus, the regular army, the bureaucracy and the whole machine of bourgeois oppression (**in order**

to protect itself against the exploited themselves).

Iraqi "anti-imperialism" shows the same basic contradictoriness on the question of the **fraternization of the peoples of the area**. It's enough to look at two things. Firstly, the question of the Kurds, equally oppressed by all of the bourgeois states in the area (Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria), has been totally neglected or - what is worse - has been made even more bitter; this is a line favouring the **division** rather than the unification of the Middle Eastern masses. Secondly, the question of the Egyptian immigrants in Iraq and Kuwait, whose return to Egypt is certainly not (at least, not completely) spontaneous. It is true that the political intention of Baghdad is to make life more complicated for Mubarak's regime; but this objective is not being pursued by means of a mobilisation of the Egyptian proletariat, but rather by means of a policy which risks exacerbating resentment towards Iraq and offers both the imperialist forces, and Mubarak himself, a good weapon for obstructing the welding of the oppressed masses into a single front.

Nor, as far as their **freedom of organisation and action** is concerned, has there been any change in the condition of the proletariat and the masses of Iraq (in fact, since the annexation of Kuwait, the "left-wing" opposition has had to face another turn of the screw). This freedom **was inexistent** before the Gulf crisis, and remains the same after it. Good "administration" of a real struggle against imperialism would require proletarian and "popular" control of production and distribution. The Iraqi masses clearly indicated this need with the "egg revolt" of Autumn 1988, when there was a wave of protest against speculative increases in food prices following the relaxation of state control imposed by imperialist capital. But "national unity" is in contrast with the extension of the class struggle against the bourgeois merchant classes, and so even this aspect was **arrogated to itself** by the (bourgeois) state, which stiffened the penalties against speculators. Let the exploited stay home and behave themselves!

The only real prospect for liberation

If the oppressed of the Middle East are to make a winning reply to imperialist aggression, the proletariat and the exploited masses must take the "holy war" against the USA and the West **into their own hands, extending it and taking it to its conclusion**. The realisation of this process depends on the complete revitalisation of the proletariat and the oppressed; this in turn, requires the conquest of full liberty of action and organisation in order to ensure the effective union, beyond national and state borders, of all of the populations of the Arab-Islamic world; their effective general arming and the centralisation of their forces in a single popular army, with no delegation to the regular armies; and control by the proletariat and semi-proletariat, of all aspects of social life. It

is only **from within** such an extension and radicalisation (in the Soviet sense) of the movement of the struggle against imperialism that the exploited of the Middle East can gain their autonomy and break the bourgeois restraints that still hamper them.

The possibility-necessity of effectively realising such a prospect lies, once again, in the **objective antagonism** that irreconcilably opposes the vital needs of the oppressed in the "periphery" against the "vital interests" of imperialist capital. It is this objective antagonism, and not the appeal of this or that nationalist leader, which will provide the permanent impulse for the war against the West - for as long as imperialist robbery exists - and ensure that the battle array at the beginning of this fight in the Gulf cannot be the same as that at the end.

The anti-imperialist revolutionary process, despite the fact that it has a certainly **bourgeois** content, **objectively expands** beyond the limits of its starting point because of its dynamics and the social forces that it sets in motion both at the "centre" and in the "periphery". Of course, this is not because it can provide itself with a different (proletarian and communist) programme and an appropriate organisation "from below"; rather, it is because the political and socio-economic consequences of its development postulate and materially favour (although not automatically - there is the possibility that the struggle may have a reactionary outcome) a qualitative leap in the direction of a union with the struggle of the metropolitan working class within a socialist perspective - **providing** (it should be understood) that this proletariat is capable of playing its **determinant** role in producing the "happy end" that, for a long time, we have been waiting for.

All of this is particularly true when we consider that the battle will be waged in such a vast and strategically important arena, and that (unlike during the 1956 Suez crisis and the wars against Israel) it is the American super-power which is at the head of the Western war alliance.

There are already signs of a **beginning** in this direction. It is unlikely that the apparent thawing in the relations between Iraq and Iran has nothing to do with the needs and expectations of the oppressed in both countries: the overcoming of a fratricidal opposition which has only brought grist to imperialist mills. Nor does it seem to us that the prompt response of the Palestinian masses to the call for a "holy war" is due to either the directives of Arafat's capitulating diplomacy (which have a completely different address) or to some kind of "fanatical" passion for Iraq or the figure of Saddam himself; it is due to the totally founded intuition that this appeal offers the Palestinian *Intifadah* the prospect of extending and reinforcing the struggle. The same is true for the poorest sectors of the population of tormented Lebanon, who will never be able to forgive Saddam for having allowed his differences with Syria to lead to the protection of Aoun, the leader of the most reactionary gang ever to have infested the country. Furthermore, with its appeal at the Amman "pan-

Arab" Conference, what else was the *Intifadah* Command doing, if not "interfering" in diplomatically "reserved" questions and pressurising inconsequential or traitorous nationalist leaderships, when it invited those Arab governments which had not already declared themselves against Saddam to use the weapon of an oil boycott or when it peremptorily invited Hassad to withdraw his troops from Saudi Arabia?

(On the contrary, how disastrous it would be for the Kurds to try to keep themselves out of this anti-imperialist mobilisation in the hope - how many times has it been vain or suicidal in the past! - that their good services to the West will lead to them obtaining their longed-for right to self-determination. The Kurdish people will never be able to settle their accounts with the bourgeoisies - there's not just one! - that oppress them, unless they are also, and above all, prepared to fight imperialism).

Yes, the exploited masses must take the war against the imperialists into their own hands. In this way, they can also obstruct the Iraqi regime's concessions to imperialism and undermine its whole state machinery of oppression. They will not only be engaging the imperialist powers in a war of historical importance, but the revolutionary energies of the exploited classes will also strike at the heart of those Arab regimes which are most enfeoffed to imperialism and sound the coming of the hour of truth to that more "radical" (in terms of state policy) Arab nationalism which is championed by Hassad of Syria - currently, and not by chance, renamed the "*Lion of Damascus and the rabbit of the desert*".

The more that this "*jihad*" of exploited Arab-Muslims against imperialism is really carried through to its end, the more the only real prospect of liberation for all of the exploited of the world (outlined at Baku in 1920) will return to being **seen** and **understood** for what it is.

But if the international proletarian front is finally to have its first tangible unitary experiences, it is indispensable that "our" working class does not hold itself back (amorphously, absently and objectively an accomplice to the aggression), but that it does its part **both for itself and for its class comrades in arms in the Middle East**.

(From "Che Fare", No. 19, September-October 1990)

COMMUNISTS AND THE FORMATION OF A UNITED ARAB STATE

Broken up into various mini-states, divided by ignoble dynastic questions, devoured alive by the rogues of foreign capitalist monopolies who willingly hand over a large slice of their oil profits, caught up in the death-dealing military alliances of imperialism, not only do the Arab states fail to create any fear in the imperialists, they also serve as pawns in imperialism's diabolical game. But what would happen if, instead of being suicidally divided, all of the Arab-populated African and Asian territories were united into a single Arab nation? Would this only mean the reawakening of Africa as a whole? No. All of us who are actively involved in the communist revolution would gain much more. We would be present at the announcement of the definitive and irreversible death sentence of Old Europe, this rotten, corrupt and murderous bourgeois Europe infested with reaction and more or less camouflaged fascism, and which, for the last forty years has been the inexhaustible hotbed of counter-revolution and imperialistic wars.

It is for this reason that we are in favour of the Arab national revolution, and against those Arab governments which either openly pursue separatist or reactionary ends (the Middle Eastern monarchies) or aim at a superficial reformism and collaboration with the West (Bourghiba, Mahomet V). Unlike the communists of Moscow, we cannot unconditionally support Nasser's pan-Arab movement because it contains too much reactionary ballast, ably (but vainly) disguised by demagoguery. The national state will not be founded by them. They all like to pose as champions of Islam, but their Islamism is to the companions of Mahomet as Christian Catholicism is to the activists in the catacombs.

(from **The Historical Causes of Arab Separatism**, "Programma Comunista", No.6, 1958)

The aware proletariat is not interested in the formation of a national state in itself, but in the social transformations that this will bring about. It is interested in the dialectic outlet of those "powerful economic factors" that Lenin saw as being strait-jacketed and immobilised by the self-perpetuating and anachronistic political structures of semi-feudal and backward countries. There is no doubt that the creation of a united Arab state would lead to a profound social revolution by brushing aside the reactionary obstacles which stand in its way.

(from **The gangster imperialism of the dollar attacks the Arab revolution**, "Programma Comunista", No.14, 1958).

ON MARXISM AND ISLAMISM

"Battaglia Comunista" 's * criticism of our position on Islamism is the result of a macroscopic misunderstanding. According to "Prometeo",

*"... OCI (raises) Islamism (to the position of) a mysteriously revolutionary factor. Is this because Islam presents itself as the faith of the poor and describes Allah as the protector of the poor, or for some other reason? Bordiga wrote a book called **"The Factors of Race and Nation in Marxist Theory"**, but didn't dream of including religious factors. Perhaps OCI could update us."*

To start with, OCI has done nothing to raise anything, since Islamism **has been** a truly revolutionary factor. A classical reference:

*"Mohammedanism, codified in the Koran, was the **ideology of the social revolution** of the nomadic desert peoples, who were dedicated to the raising of livestock as much as to pillaging during normal periods, and who rose up against the powerful merchant oligarchy ruling in Mecca. (...) Given the particular historical conditions in which it took place, the **Mohammedan revolution** could be nothing other than the collective application of the Bedouin raids; that is, an inferior form of the expropriation of wealth. In origin, the Islamic "Holy War" was a war against the usury and arrogance of wealth." ("Communist Programme", No.6, 1958).*

Even Christianity had a revolutionary historical function (which subsequently continued, albeit on a considerably more limited social and geographical scale)

* Organ of a group born as a result of a split within the Marxist tendency of Amadeo Bordiga. Today, "Prometeo" is the theoretical journal published by this group.

before it was transformed into an *instrumentum regni* of the exploiting classes in the fourth century A.D. This was discussed by Engels in "**Towards a History of Primitive Christianity**" and in "**The Peasant War in Germany**".

In the former, Engels even drew a parallel between early Christianity (the bearer of the " 'socialism' possible at the time") and the proletarian movement:

*"The history of primitive Christianity offers a number of points of contact with the modern workers' movement. Like the workers' movement, Christianity was originally a **movement of the oppressed**: it first manifested itself as the religion of slaves and freedmen, the poor and the unprotected, of **peoples subjugated and dispersed by Rome**. Christianity and workers' socialism both preach an imminent release from slavery and misery; .. both are persecuted and hunted ... ". (Be careful, however: these historical parallels should not be allowed to form the basis of mystifying extrapolations)*

When speaking of the 1525 German revolution, Engels highlighted the fact that the plebian-peasant heresies and the highly active extreme wing of the insurrectional movement led by the "proto-communist" theologian, Muenzer, played an *avant garde* social and political role despite the fact that it marched under particular religious banners. The same can be said for the popular heretical movements of the late medieval and early Renaissance periods in England, Bohemia, France, etc., which attacked outdated economic relationships (either physically or "symbolically"), and prepared the ground for the flowering of a modern bourgeois society that can be considered **revolutionary** in comparison with feudalism.

So much for the "religious factor" as a revolutionary force **in the past**. But the objection of "Prometeo" leads on to a fundamental theoretical question: **What is this "religious factor", and what does it consist of?** The answer is that it is nothing other than a "**social product**" (VII Theses on Feuerbach); the result, in the brain and the world of the emotions, of **given material** social relationships. For Marxism, religious fantasies (like all ideas in general) do not just fall into people's heads "out of the blue"; following less "noble" routes, they arrive from the opposite direction, from the economic sub-structure of society. Of course, there is the mediation of specific intellectual activity; but this activity too is **socially determined** by material interests and needs. Consequently, the history and function of religions and the "religious factor" can only be understood by starting with the concrete relationships of production and property, and those between peoples, etc., from which all all forms of false consciousness originate - and not vice-versa. As Lenin declared, religious oppression can be explained by economic oppression.

Unlike anarchic, "pure" or ethical "communism", materialist communism holds

that the only struggle against the religious illusions of the masses which is really effective and useful in terms of the revolutionary unification of the proletariat is one which is directed against the objective forces generating the illusions themselves. It is on the basis of materialist "calculation" (and not tactical expediency) that the communist movement, while working on the diffusion of the only completely scientific form of atheism, has never emphasised the struggle against **religion as such**. Indeed, it has always been diffident in the face of that type of democratic, bourgeois (and sometimes so-called socialist) laicism which **separates** the struggle against religious beliefs and institutions from the class struggle and, as a result of its artificial inflation of the "religious factor", functions as a curb or interclassist diversion of the workers' struggle (only to be ready to come to peaceful terms with its "sworn clerical enemies" whenever it is necessary to safeguard the highly spiritual intangible good that capitalism means to both of them).

But to come to the political point: we make absolutely no claims that **contemporary** Islam, in any of its variants, is a revolutionary factor. The militant Islamism of the end of the XXth century is not, and cannot be (however it describes itself) a kind of replay of revolutionary Mohammedanism. They have something in common in terms of their capacity to attract the poor masses, but their socio-historic contexts and the realities of the class forces involved are completely different. Like other religions, contemporary Islam (including its most radical elements) is **totally subject to the needs of capitalism** and, just as capitalism has become reactionary, the function of Islamism cannot be anything but **reactionary**. And this would be even more true if, as some Islamic tendencies preach, there were to be a return to the barbaric "egalitarian" mercantilism of primitive Islamism.

Our position is **very different** from that understood by BC. For anything but "mysterious" reasons, a **particular** Islamic movement finds itself in the position of being the (temporary) expression of a **revolutionary social force** made up of the exploited Arab-Islamic masses. Our Marxist duty is, above all, to understand why it is (and this is the requested updating of an **analysis** made according to a method which has not changed) that, in an enormous Afro-Asiatic region, the message of militant Islamism appears to the mass of the disinherited as a radical message of anti-imperialist struggle.

The key to this enigma lies in the centuries-old Western **capitalist and imperialist domination** over the areas which traditionally belonged to Islamic civilisation. Marx wrote: "*Religious misery is, at the same time, the expression of real misery and a protest against it*".

The peculiarity of a given Islam is precisely the fact that it expresses a **bourgeois** insistence on the liberation of the Arab-Islamic world from the under-development into which it has been plunged by imperialism. This is a demand which is effectively "anti-imperialist"; but it represents an anti-imperialism which is so miserable and ready for compromise that it makes prudent recourse to

the mystifying religious disguises of the past in order to avoid calling the conflicting material interests of the present by their real names.

The support that the oppressed masses give to **this** expression of Islamism which, albeit demagogically, proclaims a "Holy War" against imperialism, is not due to their cultural backwardness (the arrogant explanation proffered by "indifferentiationists" from the heights of their "lay consciousness"), but to their physical sense of urgency of the need to **unite** and **fight** against imperialism. They group themselves around the only "party" which seems to be prepared to do as much, conferring upon it a markedly .pa

plebian connotation which distinguishes it from the moderately reformist currents of Islamism, as well as from more formalistic traditionalism.

We do not accredit such Islamism; we do not back it; much less do we support it. On the contrary, we have repeatedly insisted that the ideology and leadership of Islam do nothing but **block** and **deviate from the inside** the anti-imperialist movement (look at Iran, Lebanon, Algeria, etc.). When we say that Islamic "anti-imperialism" (or that of Saddam Hussein) is inconsequential, we are not saying that proletarian anti-imperialism can go along with them for a part of the way and **then** separate itself. As early as in the "combined" struggle with the revolutionary bourgeoisie against the feudal system, the communist proletariat was careful never to give up its own **separate identity**. And this is even more crucial in the anti-imperialist democratic bourgeois revolution, whose potential for crossing national borders and sparking off the international socialist revolution has become enormously greater.

From the beginning to the end, the communist and Islamic perspectives are opposed to each other; but this contraposition can only develop inside the **real movement. In the absence of a Marxist point of reference**, or rather because of the appalling political backwardness of the working class in the imperialist countries, this movement **often** (but we mustn't exaggerate in generalising) takes on Islamic hues. This is the complication which needs to be put into the balance. And our account will go into the red **unless** the anti-bourgeois and anti-imperialist struggle is extended and radicalised. It is **only** the development of the class struggle against internal and "external" **earthly** enemies which will allow the exploited masses (the revolutionary potential) to separate themselves from the "false prophets" of their liberation (Islamism as a reactionary container). This is where the difference between proclamations and the reality will inevitably destroy the credibility of the priests of Islam (and other religions). Little more than a decade of national and social struggle in the Middle East has led to Khomeinism being deprived of a part of its "revolutionary" halo, both inside and outside Iran. It is **only** the isolation of the insurgent Arab-Islamic masses from the Western proletariat which continues to ensure that they are pushed towards the "lesser evils" of Islamism or Saddam-type Arab-Islamism.

This isolation must be broken. From here, this can only be done by taking

up once again the struggle against **our own** imperialism and that of the West as a whole, and by supporting the revolt of the oppressed in the Islamic world **without any preconditions**; in particular, without the **chauvinist** precondition (be it implicit or explicit) that they should first abandon their faith in Islam or their own culture.

The Arab-Islamic proletariat and working masses (like the Polish workers and many others) **will come out of their "religious misery" at the extent to which they will fight against the slavery of their "real misery"**. This was something the Communist International was well aware of when, without forgetting the existence (and the difficulties) of the social and cultural-religious differences between the East and the West, it called upon the oppressed masses (who were considerably more backward than those fighting in the Middle East today) to unite themselves with the Western proletariat in a **common, real** and resolute **class Jihad** of the exploited **of every race and colour** against imperialism and the exploiting classes of every country; a call which, at that time, received enthusiastic assent. Listen to the way Zinoviev confronted the problem in his speech at the Eastern Peoples' Congress in Baku:

*"The movement led by Kemal wants to liberate the 'sacred person' of the Califf from the hands of his enemies. Is this a communist point of view? Certainly not. But we respect the religious spirit of the masses and know how to give them a different kind of education. This will require long years of work. We confront the religious beliefs of the working masses of the East and other countries with prudence and circumspection. But it is our duty to say at this Congress that the government of Kemal Pasha supports the power of the Sultan in Turkey; this you should not do, regardless of your religious considerations and motivations. You must go forward (in the struggle against your class enemies, whether or not they are 'sacred persons' - Ed.) **and not allow yourselves to be dragged back towards the past**. We think that the bell will soon toll for the sultans; in the meantime, **you should not tolerate any kind of autocracy**. It is up to you to destroy any faith (wordly, political -Ed.) in the the Sultan and to build authentic Soviets."*

This is the materialist, class and truly internationalist approach towards the relationship between the communist movement and the revolutionary Islamic masses. It should not be difficult to understand that OCI has not made any attempt to "update" it; but only to **repropose it in its entirety**. That all of this might sound ... Arabic to the chronic dissidents of Marxism is not to be marvelled at.

(Extract from "More on the Gulf War. In Reply to the 'Criticisms' of the 'Indifferentiationists' " - August 1991)

REPERCUSSIONS IN THE WEST: THE WRETCHEDNESS OF REFORMISM AND THE TASKS OF THE PROLETARIAT

The question necessarily returns, therefore, to the metropoli, and its proletariat and communists.

There is no doubt that the war in the Gulf will have profound repercussions on the West, given that world capitalism was faced by a number of tensions and unknown factors even before August 2.

The USA was on the brink of a recession, or at least in a phase of economic stagnation. The "golden decade" seemed to have effectively arrived at its end because of the difficulty of continuing Reagan-scale increases in armament expenditure when the world scenario included the "resignation" of the USSR from its role as a "super-power" and a new enormous increase in the USA's national debt which, unlike in previous years, it was becoming increasingly difficult to finance.

On the other hand, however, the reunification of Germany and the resistance of the Japanese economy, kept open the possibility of a "non- traumatic" (except for the dominated countries) transition from an exhausted Reagan-style recovery to a relaunch of the West driven by Japan and Europe (particularly Germany).

But the international situation as a whole continued to be characterised by an exasperated competition for markets (especially in Eastern Europe and the USSR) while, at the same time, the increasingly chaotic condition of the Eastern European economies and the growing acuteness of socio-economic disorders in the dominated continents never ceased to transmit destabilising pulsations from the "periphery" of Europe and the world to the "centre" of the world capitalist system.

The war in the Gulf **has aggravated and will continue to aggravate all of the contradictions and antagonisms of world capitalism**, making it much less likely (to say the least) that such a "non-traumatic" transition can take place. It is still too early to make an analytical evaluation of these repercussions, although we shall have the opportunity of returning to the subject in our next issue. Here, we are more interested in concentrating on the **characteristics of**

the attack which, as the other side of the coin of its aggression against the exploited of the Middle East, the imperialist bourgeoisie has already begun to launch against the working class.

Let's consider the Italian situation. For "our" capitalist class, the war front against Iraq has, above all, served to accelerate the **recruitment** of the proletariat in the service of the nation - continuing the process already "peacefully" begun (during the years of restructuring) in terms of the competitiveness of Italian companies and Italy itself.

The need for this "step forward" in our "common" interests (**common to all exploiters!**) is explained in increasingly explicit terms. On 12 September, "La Stampa" (newspaper of Turin, whose owner is FIAT) explained that after Yalta,

*"being sovereign states does not only mean (for Italy and Europe - note) a unified market and a common currency, but also the capacity for a common defence, the capacity to act as a deterrent against any country possessing nuclear or chemical weapons, **the will** -in the final instance - of thinking of **war** as nothing than the preparation of an honourable peace".*

Therefore, according to the proprietors, it is also necessary to bear in mind that "we", as a nation, may have to take by force what "we" consider to be indispensable for "us".

War requires a "war economy", as the EEC has already recognised, for all of the European proletariat. In Italy, which will perhaps suffer greater repercussions from the Gulf crisis than those hypothesised for other European countries, Andreotti's government has already declared that there is an immediate risk that the country will be relegated to the "Second Division" unless a series of chronic problems are solved (a macroscopic national debt, the efficiency of the public services, the Civil Service, etc.). A little before, Fiat (the leader of Italian industry) had indicated the need for a "total quality" programme which would be carried out with the collaboration and not the opposition of the Unions.

It is more than clear that the bourgeoisie intends to pin the costs of its aggression against the peoples of the Middle East on the working class, but - beware! - the current priority of this inevitable attack against the "internal enemy" is to try to make the working class **partners** to imperialist aggression on the political and "ideological" level. For this reason, it is possible (and even probable) that the bourgeois will try to obtain this collaboration by "offering" the working class a "deal" that the sacrifices will not be "one-way" (this is the sense, for example, of the proposal for a new tax on houses formulated by the socialist Minister of Finance, and immediately judged as "left-wing" by a number of trade union leaders). Confindustria itself (the

Confederation of Italian Industry)), while quick to take advantage of the new uncertainties in the world's economy, aims at modifying the wages structure and the criteria of negotiation (rather than an immediate lowering of wages - which would be difficult in any case with the negotiations for a number of contracts still open) with the intention of eroding the material unity of the working class. And it, too, is attempting to **involve** the trade union **bonzes** in this policy - and even in joint company management.

It must be understood that this **type** of attack does not exclude, but rather, **better prepares** a successive offensive against living and working conditions based **precisely** on this attempt to deny the autonomy of the working class even more by asking it to accept as its own the war against its class brothers in the "Southern" world.

The proletariat will be able to repel this bourgeois attack only if they manage to expose its **imperialist nature** and **ends** - robbery, looting, exploitation and the reinforcement of the capitalist system of exploitation - and they understand how to reject its indivisible **political** and **economic** content by **relaunching their struggle against capitalism and their solidarity with the exploited of the Middle East and throughout the "periphery"**.

Reformism goes in the opposite direction. The Italian Communist Party and all of the European Social-Democrats have applauded the strangulatory blockade of Irak and the *diktats* of the USA and the UN, aligning themselves with their respective capitalisms and imperialism as a whole. It is true that they have tried to distinguish themselves from a more extreme militarism, but only by explicitly taking as their own the central assumption of the imperialist position: the petrol Gulf and the entire world is "our backyard" and the area of "our" vital interests; consequently, "we" have the right - and even the duty - of intervening there as the defenders of "peace" against the risks of war which notoriously come ... to the West from the "dictators" and ... from the super-exploited "fanatical" and "integralist" masses of the Southern world (farewell "Palestinian cause" and "olive youths"!).

A well-defined preoccupation agitates the leaders of the indefinable "thing" (that is the ex-PCI): that the war in the Gulf could provoke a blaze of such proportions that its repercussions will destroy those margins which enable the proletariat to be "kept good". This is the reason for their invitations to "moderation", despite the fact that the object of the big game hunt is **the same**, also for them! But what alarms them even more (as it does their accomplices in the government) is the possibility that the Northern proletariat and the Southern exploited unite **in a single anti-capitalist front**. This is the reason for the policy of **disarming** the proletariat, calling upon them to support the imperialist interests of the class which exploits them and pushing them to deepen the ditch, already dramatically difficult to bridge, which separates them from the proletariat of the "periphery".

This bankrupt, socio-chauvinist approach must be denounced for exactly what

it is. Communists mustn't hesitate in saying that, if - in the suicidal hope of being able to gain some advantage - the working class accepts this approach as its own, it would not be supporting an attack against "the others", but an attack **against itself**; it would not only be taking part in an armed aggression against its class comrades of the Middle East, but against itself - and it would to pay the price at every level.

The war in the Gulf is a war against the proletariat; and it's for this reason that the metropolitan proletariat cannot "abstain". If it doesn't want to be pushed back once again into the abyss of an imperialist war, the working class must break the chains of national unity, denounce the imperialist aggression against Iraq and the peoples of the Middle East, relaunch its own indivisible **political and economic** struggle, and finally settle its accounts with "reformist" politics and a trade union policy increasingly aligned to the fundamental interests of capitalism and disastrous for its own class interests.

Communists call upon the proletariat to do this and nothing less. We make no attempt to hide the difficulties of the situation. The magnificent rebellion of the exploited Arab and Islamic masses is laying the basis for a reapproaching of the two "sections" of the world proletariat - but its outcome is not automatic and cannot be taken for granted. This division has come about for non-contingent and for not exclusively (or mainly) idealistic reasons and, in the immediate future, it could even become more profound - in the case that sectors of the working class allow themselves to be dragged into the campaign of anti-Arab activation. But our trust in the ultimately decisive weight of objective determination suggests that the antagonism between the capitalist system and the proletariat will necessarily finish by manifesting itself even here - and the metropolitan proletariat will know how to regain its place in the vanguard of the exploited's international class war for socialism.

We don't expect a sudden change in direction: it will take a journey made up of anti-capitalist battles to **transform** the working class of today. Now, it is important to **begin** this journey. We Communists will take the greatest care in observing every demonstration, every step of the working class and the workers which goes in the direction of concretely **breaking** the climate of war mobilisation and the imperialists' recruitment campaign - and leads the proletariat back to the battle for its own autonomous interests. For this, we shall struggle to the end against every political approach which, under whatever name, makes it more difficult to achieve international proletarian unity.

(From "Che Fare", No. 19, September-October 1990)

THE CENTRAL POINTS FOR COMMUNIST POLITICAL ACTION

So far, we have offered wide-ranging (although perhaps never sufficient) considerations on the elements for analysing the existing conflict, but we feel sure that the reader will have clearly understood that these elements are nothing but the necessary bases for political action. We here summarise (pardon us for the repetitions) the points around which we call for the intervention of militant Communists.

1) **Unequivocal denunciation of the imperialist aggression against Iraq and the whole of the exploited Arab-Islamic world.** Because this is aimed at preventing these people from making use of their own resources, protecting them from imperialist robbery and directing them towards their own development (a right which can only be acquired by means of a victorious conflict against imperialism which is to say, in the final instance, the affirmation of socialism).

Independently of who has "promoted" it and who is "leading" it, the anti-imperialist revolt should given full recognition, because its fundamental **driving force** is the **incompatibility** of the world of the exploited and the interests of their imperialist predators.

Specific denunciation of "our own" government and "our own" bourgeoisie: we know full well that it is the USA which **leads** the imperialist party, but they do it (to their own advantage) in the interests of the whole gang and with the complicity of all of its members. Repugnance against American imperialism would have no constructive sense unless we begin to fight the battle here, against "our domestic Public Enemy No.1". An "exclusively" anti-American anti-imperialism, which fails to admit that its first and principal objective should be "the enemy at home", could easily lead to an anti-Americanism that serves only to protect "our" (bourgeois) diversity - to be preserved, conquered reformistically or, at a more prosaic and some way disguised level, claimed as **our** specific and autonomous imperialist space.

But Italy is not "diverse", nor can it have any "differences" within a bourgeois and imperialist framework. It can only have, and has, a different digestive apparatus from that of its major partners (and competitors): striking imperialist appetites here is the only way of seriously striking them elsewhere.

2) The unmasking of all forms of indifference.

The worst kind of indifference - sometimes, even as disguised as being truly left-wing - is the indifference underlying the refusal to support an anti-imperialist rebellion on the grounds that it is a "non-Communist" movement (as is certainly the case with the Arab rebellion), led by bourgeois forces (also true) and that, "therefore", it is inevitably destined to become simply a pawn in an inter-bourgeois struggle (which is absolutely not true). The fact that the imperialist order is shaken by its bourgeois claims establishes the dialectic conditions for transforming this struggle into an international revolutionary movement for socialism; the consistent achievement of the bourgeois democratic postulates of liberty and equality is an essential part of the full-scale struggle which will eventually lead to the defeat of imperialism itself. What is blocking the current movement and may lead to it becoming an element in imperialist games is not its presumed "nature", but the indifferent deafness of the metropoli - which is particularly disgusting when it is cloaked in "revolutionary purity".

3) The exposure of every kind of "pacifism" or "neutrality".

The position of anyone who says that this is a war which "has nothing to do with us" is a treacherous and false position. The war has **everything to do with us!** It has to do with **imperialist interests as a whole** and, **therefore**, has to do with imperialist Italy **in particular**. Claiming the right-responsibility of "keeping out of it" is the same as deliberately giving up the fight against national bourgeois interests and ideologies; it is the same as refusing to call the proletariat to battle or refusing to join them on the battlefield.

Those people who, in the name of "peace", declare themselves against **the way** the war is being conducted and call for a more authoritative line on the part of the UN, an international conference of arbitration, etc., are merely adopting a position of intervention which is in "competition" with the intervention now taking place. Their call for "the world government of peace" is nothing other than a call for a more effective "universal" imperialist government of **oppression**. Any such "world government" can **only** be (and is) a continuation of the present system: the international dictatorship of American gunboats and American finance (although it is true that the Americans have to face the competition of their major partners who would like to replace them at the helm and sink their own teeth into the succulent flesh of the Middle East).

Empty of substance, and without even one appreciable gesture of rebellion, the only variant that the "pacifism" of today offers to "peaceful aspirations", "brotherhood", "humanity", etc. (excluding any consequent anti-bourgeois struggle), is its "critical" stance towards the war: more reactionary (but **no less military**).

4) In response: **Unconditional support for the anti-imperialist war in the Middle East.**

"Unconditional" means not establishing any preconditions for such support. Marxists do not delegate the leadership of the struggle to Saddam Hussein - nor to anyone else who may be "better" or "not as bad"; Marxists do not call for a fusion (or confusion) with national bourgeoisies. Marxists have a clear understanding of the **conditions** in which the bourgeois democratic claims of the oppressed masses can pass from the hands of the bourgeoisie directly into the hands of the proletariat and oppressed classes themselves - in the "permanent" pursuit of the struggle for socialism.

The first condition is that this struggle continues and is radicalised locally. The second (but second only for purposes of explanation) is that here, in the metropoli, the proletariat does its part by opposing its own bourgeoisie, launching the message of fraternization with the Middle Eastern masses in revolt.

*"Centuries of imperialist oppression of the weak and colonised peoples has aroused not only the **anger** of the working masses in the oppressed countries, but also a **general distrust** towards the **countries** which oppress them, **including the proletariat of these countries**" (Lenin).*

If this is true (and it is true), it is necessary that

*"the conscious Communist proletariat in every country treats the **survival** of nationalist feelings in those countries and peoples which have been oppressed for a long time with particular care and attention".*

This care and attention, coupled with a determined struggle against the bourgeoisie **here**, is the fundamental premise of any support for the independence of the oppressed masses of these countries and their liberation from bourgeois hegemony.

Their objective is to ensure that the masses have complete freedom of action and organisation; that the people are effectively armed; that there is an effective brotherhood in the struggle between them which goes beyond state or national borders. It is in this context that **we** must play a part here by encouraging this "**decanting**" of social and political forces from the Middle East scenario. Apart from this, any appeal for the self-organisation of the Arab masses and any criticism of their organisation on the part of the national bourgeoisies is simply the mystification of charlatans or, rather, the most infamous pretext for denying the Middle Eastern **revolutionary** movement any possibility whatsoever of moving **forward** outside the ranks of followers of the various Saddams.

5) Denunciation and struggle against saddling the metropolitan working class with the costs of imperialist aggression.

This is possible only if the imperialist action is exposed for what it really is: an operation aimed at confirming and strengthening the domination of capital and the laws of profit and accumulation on a world scale; an attack - initially mainly "political" - against the internal working class and its fundamental class interests, the costs of which are to be simply off-loaded onto the backs of wage labour.

It is not true that the employers are simply using the costs of the operation in the Gulf as a "pretext" for not conceding anything to the workers; really, they are ready even to pay something "in favour" of a working class which allows itself to be recruited by the socio-chauvinist forces of war in the hope of obtaining at least the crumbs.

What is true is that it is the reformists themselves who, pretending that they want to ask for something in exchange for their collaboration, give up the only potentially victorious grounds for any real claim: the struggle against the **economic and political compatibilities** of capital, and against its laws of robbery and oppression. The "theory" of employer "pretexts" is only ... the pretext of the reformists for withdrawing from a consequent revindictory struggle which would mean fighting capitalism at all levels.

6) Propaganda for a united international proletarian front.

This has nothing to do with words of "solidarity" or "sympathy", or our support for "another" world. It means re-establishing unitary ties between the metropolitan struggle and the struggle in the dominated "periphery". A first test of this capacity can be provided by the relationship with immigrant workers, who are to be considered as an integral part of a single class army (and put into a condition to fulfill such a role). Given that even the previous pietistic "solidarity" is beginning to draw back, any movement in this direction would be a concrete step forward in the affirmation of internationalism.

7) Attention to every element, however small and whatever its initial characteristics, of concrete mobilisation against the course of imperialist war.

While we disdain the after-dinner comments of people who would like to "distinguish themselves" from the current direction of the bourgeoisie, but who never question its nature and never declare (even if only in words) a class war against it, we are ready to make the most of every opportunity - in the streets and in the factories - in which there is a **concrete** manifestation of an **initial rupture** of the internal social and political front for "social peace". This is the ever-fertile ground we intend to cultivate. We will not put our general positions in a "common front" with anybody; but our readiness to a "common front" of struggle remains as intact and determined as ever.

8) Finally, but really **first of all** - because without it, the rest cannot exist: **the work of Communist education**, the study of Marxist classics concerning the question of the countries oppressed by imperialism and the struggle of the oppressed against imperialism, to understand in depth - in order to be able to struggle to the end - the past history and the present reality of colonial and neo-colonial domination.

(From "Che Fare", No. 19, September-October 1990)

OIL AT ZERO COST

"The truly vital American interest in the Kuwait crisis is to ensure that the Gulf is the secure and stable source for the industrialized West of reasonably priced oil":

with these words, published by the "Washington Post" (17 August), ex-Secretary of State Brzezinski openly declared the **real reason** for the attack of the imperialist West against an army of exploited Arabs.

It's a war for oil. The immediate and violent reaction of the West is due to the fact that, despite "long-term" fantasies, oil remains **the essential raw material** of world capitalism. It is the major source of energy and lies at the basis of a growing number of different products. Consequently, it is of **vital** importance to the capitalist need for profits to have a **stable** and **sure** supply at "reasonable" prices.

And the price of oil has been "extremely reasonable" (not to say ridiculous) for a long time now. An authority on the subject, J-M Chevalier, says that oil production costs between 1859 and 1970, measured in constant monetary terms, showed a **general tendency to diminish**. A handful of large Anglo-American companies, fully supported by their respective governments and by the big banks, **monopolised** production and the world oil market to their own advantage and that of the West. However, the combination of high revenues and minimal extraction costs within a framework of relatively decreasing sales prices was only possible as long as the pillaged (particularly Arab) countries lacked any real political strength and the "Seven Sisters" were obliged to face technical and natural (although perspective) limits of petrol production.

By a not altogether casual coincidence, both of these contradictions were exposed between 1970 and 1980, a decade marked by the oil crises of 1973 and 1979 which led to sharp increases in oil prices. The reawakening of the Arab masses (in Egypt, Iraq, Algeria, Palestine and Libya) encouraged the Arab bourgeoisie to recover at least formal control of their oil resources and to increase its price to the West. Surprisingly enough, the large oil companies were also interested in increasing the price of oil, but for very different reasons

(to finance the search for oil **outside** the Middle East and to prepare the conditions for diversifying energy sources; which is to say **to remove the oil weapon from the hands of the exploited of the Arab-Islamic world**). The fact that this "convergence" of interests was only temporary - and we are sorry for the lovers of thrillers - was demonstrated by the effects of the Iranian uprising.

The imperialist bourgeoisies could hardly fail to notice that the (first) ten years of "reasonable" prices, "reasonable", **not for the exploiters**, of Milan and New York, **but for the exploited of Teheran and Algiers**, had seen the post-war cycle of development founder in a double recession, nor that the same decade was one of widespread struggle on the part of the working classes and wage-earners of Europe. The chancelleries of the West were also well aware that, in order to exit from the crisis and restore social peace "here", they had to **"bring back order" to the Gulf and return oil prices to "reasonable" levels (for imperialist super-profits)**. But the greatest shock for our domestic Emirs was that a popular insurrection led to the dethroning of the Shah of Iran. In its turn, this led to a Western counter-offensive which, in terms of its immediate economic objectives, has been a war for oil at zero cost.

An **uninterrupted war**, about which we shall limit ourselves to describing its salient points of passage: the economic boycott against Khomeinist Iran, considered the spearhead in the policy of high oil prices; the fomenting of the reactionary war between Iran and Iraq not only in order to divert and crush the revolutionary uprising of the exploited Iranians, but also to bleed the only possible points of reference for an OPEC unwilling to submit in the face of imperialist capital; the consequent unsettling of OPEC itself; the accelerated rearmament and strict surveillance of the putrescent oil monarchies; the launching of new, non-OPEC production onto the world market. There was no lack of concrete results: by the mid-1980's, the price of a barrel of oil (the equivalent of 158.98 litres), \$40 in 1980, was oscillating at around \$25. Western economies, however, while feeling the benefit, remained fragile. The Reagan recovery which had begun to shine in 1983-84, was already beginning to lose lustre by the end of 1985. It was at this point that the Washington - Tokyo-Bonn axis, **united** in the face of the risk of a premature new hold-up in the process of accumulation, **dictated** at Ryadh a policy which was **knowingly designed to bring about a collapse in oil prices**.

A double collapse in the interests of the West

And an authentic collapse it was: in two months (January-February 1986), the barrel dropped from \$25 to \$15 (down 40%), and it remained at or even below this level right through to the end of 1989. It was enough to make Saudi Arabia double its production, without any real opposition. And, for that

matter, with the working masses of Iran and Iraq busy slitting each other's throats only for the exclusive glory of imperialism, and *Intifah* (dialogue with the West) reigning at Algiers, where could any such resistance come from? From the "undisciplined" Ghedaffi? Well: he was got out of the way in the name of "international law"!

With oil at zero cost, the West had reached a number of its vital objectives. By consistently depressing the prices of raw materials (for which oil has been the point of reference since the end of the Second World War), it had prolonged the recovery of its economy by some years. It had assured itself of reserves with which to smooth over class conflicts in the metropoli and bring about a restructuring of its productive forces in order to consolidate its predominant world position. It had weakened politically "unfavoured" countries (from Libya to Iran), pushed countries on the edge of bankruptcy even further towards the abyss (Mexico, Indonesia, Nigeria) and ... and even benefited from the oil "counter-shock" of 1986- 89, by seeing the acceleration of the decline of its "historical adversary", the USSR.

But what was a party for the capitalists and other parasitic classes of the "North", meant years of even darker famine for the exploited and the proletariat of the "South". The rekindling of the mobilisation of the working Arab masses, **beginning with the Palestinian *Intifadah***, could not but lead (sooner or later) to a tendency for the price of oil to recover. This promptly felt by the market during 1989 and, for the second time, the producing countries most envassalled to imperialism created another, disastrous **excess of production**. Between January and June 1990, the cost of a barrel once again plummeted, from 19.2 to 13.7 dollars. In real terms, oil ended up costing **less than it had in 1970**.

The United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, the most exposed in the face of the "peaceful" aggression that had brought Iran and Iraq back together again, even went as far as to propose formally abolishing the system of "quotas" and permitting everybody to pump as much oil as they wanted ... at least, the supervisors. With this inevitable excess, the **capitalist** party finished and the **imperialist** war in the Gulf began. Despite the fact that the **world** picture had become objectively fuller of contradictions since 1979, the immediate economic goal at stake was the same: to guarantee Middle-East oil supplies at the same price as that of biblical manna, nothing.

Middle-Eastern oil, or oil in general? The more time passes, the more this distinction loses any sense. Capitalist development, with its idiotic squandering of the natural wealth accumulated over hundreds of millions of years, has ensured that the not-insignificant oil reserves of countries like the United States and Great Britain have been reduced to a trickle (7-8 years). **Two-thirds** of the remaining oil is in the Middle-East.

The oil of the Persian Gulf, as well as being the only abundant supply, is not only **by far the cheapest to extract and buy**, but also **provides by far**

the greatest mineral revenue, the "Arab" share of which - by means of institutions such as the K.I.O. of London - is speedily routed into the coffers of Boeing, Fiat, Hoechst and Paribas, helps finance the American deficit (the same that has allowed Star Wars rearmament and the various missions to the Gulf), and supplies Western governments with the money necessary to oil the machine of chauvinist consensus.

Although little is said about it, besides, Gulf (and especially Iran) is particularly rich in natural gas, in many respects the only real alternative to oil. It has 35% of the world's reserves; another 40% is just a stone's throw away in increasingly appetising "post-socialist" Russia.

These considerations and (we feel, significant) data lead us to the following conclusion: the war declared by the West against the Islamic-Arab working masses is a war for oil (and energy) at zero cost, whose **ultimate socio-economic substance** lies in the conflict between an economy whose decreasing production costs are brought about by the increasing exploitation and starvation of living work-force (capitalism) and an economy whose production costs are serenely rising because they are aimed at satisfying human needs (socialism).

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"International Legality" and "World Government"

THE UN: INSTRUMENT OF "PEACE AND LIBERTY" OR A "*DEN OF IMPERIALIST BRIGANDS*" ?

The idea of a "world government" of "free and equal nations", called upon to guarantee "universal rights" is an old one which has already been put to the test by the facts.

As we shall demonstrate, there is nothing new in the litanies intoned by (unreformed) "reformists" and (armed) "pacifists", or even by the simply naive with dulled consciences and class instincts.

It can be objected that, while it was not possible to realise such an idea "in the past", objective conditions, power relationships, etc., are different "today". It is this second point that we shall be looking at and we can already give our conclusion: today, **more than ever in the past**, this is a reactionary idea which, when translated into practice, **more than ever** means the sanctioning of the only right that counts - that of the strongest imperialism - with the added advantage (exclusively in the favour of this imperialism) of demobilising the brains and muscles of the exploited.

"The League of Nations": everybody free and equal ... under the dominion of the USA

It was just after the end of the First World War (an imperialist war, if we are not mistaken), that America's President Wilson presented his 14-point plan for a "League of Nations" (as it was to be called) which was to take "just" world government into its hands:

*"treaties and conventions must create the conditions for a peace which will be applauded by **mankind**, and not one which only corresponds to the **particular** interests and **momentary** objectives of*

the participating countries ... I would like to propose that all peoples unanimously accept the rule of President Monroe as the best one for the world: that no nation should try to extend its dominion over any other nation or any other people, but that all peoples must be free to determine their own form of government and their own development, without being hindered or threatened; the small peoples as much as the great and powerful".

In 1919, the League of Nations was officially founded. In the same year, the Communist International was also set up, and its judgement of the League was immediate:

*"Revolutionary proletarians throughout the world must engage an implacable struggle against the idea of Wilson's League of Nations and protest against their country's entering this **League of plunder, exploitation and counter-revolution**".*

Lenin was to speak of a "den of brigands" and everything produced by the International concerning international questions constantly underlined the fact that the so-called peace, and the so-called supra-nationality that would enforce it, were nothing other than a deformed reflection of the reality: a knife-fight between imperialist powers (on the backs of the colonies, and directly between each other) with the emergence of the USA as the main power **within** Europe itself.

It is true that the League of Nations never reached the point of becoming the sort of formal "world government" imagined by Wilson, and that the United States didn't even become a member. Nonetheless, Wilson's programme for the financial "rationalisation" of the world quietly proceeded on its course towards the "economic and political hegemony" of the USA. This was the real meaning of the developing "world government": an advanced capitalist government, increasingly less "peaceful" and "universal" because it could only exist by means of a ferocious process of concentration and centralisation which would simultaneously lead not only to **class** antagonisms, but also to antagonisms between capital **fractions** and **States** within the bourgeois "front" itself.

Inside the halls of Geneva, a number of questions came to the fore. As European states, how should we behave towards American capital; how can we handle the contrasts between ourselves within this new context of international power; how can we confront the dangers of class antagonisms in the metropoli and revolutionary uprisings in the colonies?

As usual, the potential "world government" of the League of Nations was only able to give a response to this last question. The bourgeois front remains solid when its class enemies are no longer willing to act as impersonal pawns on the chessboard of inter-imperialist conflicts, but begin to threaten the system

as a whole. Consequently, the League of Nations was to make no gesture towards restoring "humanity" to the populations of the colonies. On the contrary, its International Labour Office for the study of social and Trade Union problems (where members of the British Labour Party, German Social-Democrats and Italian corporativists worked closely side by side!) was set up with the declared intent of anticipating any reasons for turbulence.

This may appear to be contradicted by the adoption of economic sanctions against Italy in 1936, at the time of the attack against Ethiopia (the only time that the League of Nations officially "penalised" one of its members). But the opposite is the case: the "tough" stand against Mussolini did not, of course, reflect any concern for the fate of the oppressed; it simply reflected a conflict of colonial interests among the European powers themselves - France and Britain (and here Mussolini was right) only wanted to avoid Italian competition in their colonial looting. After the annexation, the League of Nations cancelled what were, in any case, the weak sanctions previously adopted against Italy and even recognised the **legitimacy** of Fascist power over Ethiopia; thus sanctioning the new relationship of power among the **imperialist** countries making up the League itself, and their "common" interest in managing them.

In 1935, the "communists" supported the sanctions of the League, anticipating the current vain desire for "world government" and "legality". What did this mean? Anything but concrete support for the colonial liberation movement (who would have dared to **really** ask France and Great Britain to withdraw from their dominions, or the League of Nations to "apply sanctions" against them for their failure to recognise the colonised peoples' right to self-determination?); it was, rather, the inclusion of "proletarian" politics into the inter-imperialist wargames upon which the "anti-Fascist" struggle was left to depend - "Anti-Fascism" and "anti-colonialism" at the service of His British Majesty!

The USSR joins the League of Nations: world capitalism recognises a partner in counter-revolution

In 1934, the USSR was admitted to the League. On June 2, "Pravda" was to write:

"The dialectic of the development of the contradictions of imperialism has led to the old League of Nations, originally intended as an instrument in the imperialist subordination of small independent states and colonial countries and in the preparation of an anti-Soviet attack, seems to have become (as a result of the process of the struggle among the imperialists themselves) an arena in which the parties in favour of maintaining the peace have triumphed - as Litvinov explained at the recent session of the CCE of the USSR. This perhaps explains the

profound changes that have taken place in the composition of the League".

A masterpiece of hypocrisy and falsification! Inter-imperialist conflicts are here invoked as an explanation of the victory of the "pacifists" (with the war in Spain on the doorstep, and the Second World War just around the corner!). Very simply, the truth was that the entry of the USSR into the League was to ensure that, having given up any kind of revolutionary internationalist approach, the country was to become a legitimate member of that "*den of brigands*" where (with methods very different from those of parliamentary discussion) the imperialist division of the world was decided. "Maintenance of the peace"! Almost immediately, the "new" League of Nations was to drink the refreshing waters of all kinds of divisions and annexations (the annexation of Austria by the Third Reich in 1938 and, in the same year, the Treaty of Munich which divided Czechoslovakia among Germany, Italy, Great Britain and France - a wonderful union between Fascisms and "anti-Fascism"!). The final act of the moribund League was the expulsion of the USSR after its occupation of Finland; once again, this was not an act of universal "justice" (after Munich ...), but the consecration of the dissolution of the League into its different war fronts (war, according to the iron laws of capitalism, being the only way of resolving the problems of "world government"). And it is well-known how, with the further developments of the war, the USSR became part of a subsequent "world government". From the ashes of the League of Nations and the Second World War, a second "*den of brigands*", the UN, was to arise, on the ground of the statements of Yalta, in February 1945 (already announced in Washington on 1 January 1942, when the USA, Great Britain, China, the USSR, and 22 other countries - subsequently joined by a further 21 - signed the United Nations Declaration).

Nor should it be forgotten how, with a good deal of forward planning, the preparation of what was to become the United Nations Organisation was combined with the equally well-prepared adoption of other measures: 1943 saw the establishment of UNRRA (the first international organisation for post-war aid and reconstruction), the IMF, and BIRD (the international bank for reconstruction and development), all of which were effective instruments in the influence that the USA was to have as post-war "world government".

Although, from a "parliamentary" point of view, the UN has always recognised the role of the USSR (a permanent seat on the Security Council for "war merit"), it and the other countries of the East were, immediately and inevitably, excluded from any real "executive power" because this was represented by the ponderous manoeuvres of "reconstruction" capital (that is, capital for the prosecution and achievement of the financial subjugation of both victors and vanquished to the USA - as the Communist International had already predicted for Wilson's original version). Quite clearly, no better fate was to

be expected for the ex-colonies, which the 1942 Declaration had promoted to the level of "equal partners" only to be able to use them as cannon-fodder during the "anti-Fascist" war.

Stalin, who in 1934 had deliriously raved about the changed nature of the League of Nations, was soon made to eat his prophecies (and this time personally) concerning the characteristics of the UN - for which he was also responsible - as "an arena of peace". Taking what was useful to him from Lenin's invective against the League of Nations, he was to change his mind yet again and denounce the prevarications practised by the "reactionary circles" of American imperialism within the UN (as ever, entrusting himself to the "progressives" who were to come); but he was careful not to leave this "*den of brigands*", to which he was tied by the interests of the USSR and the abandonment of the internationalist alternative of 1919, which was ignominiously brushed aside.

This new edition of Wilson's League of Nations found itself up against the same difficulty that capitalism has always found since its beginnings: to ensure that the people controlling the guns and the purse strings **legitimately** govern the world. The people who have the "duty" of providing "aid" also have the right to expect that their debtors recognise their obligations.

Truman's conditions were clear:

"Country by country, allocations depended upon the colour of the local government or the degree of their subjugation to policies decided on the other side of the Atlantic; in cases of doubt, the allocation is zero ... Truman's rather crude doctrine consists in using dollars for the area-by-area destruction of Russian influence, and he applies it with the delicacy of a buffalo" (A.Bordiga, **America**, in "Prometeo", May-June, '47).

The UN could do nothing but take note; by definition, the rights of usury cannot be questioned. Debtors can't complain if they have to pay high interest rates; nor can those who have no access to credit. It is their fault if they decide not to mortgage their economic and political independence!

The Atlantic Treaty was stipulated at Washington on 4 April 1949: another cold shower for Moscow, and further recriminations concerning the "betrayal" of the "principles" of Yalta (!). And another legitimization for the UN: the promise of "peaceful" support for all of the contracting powers was not in contrast, but a corollary of international law. Today, this is also accepted by the accusers of yesterday, now reassured by the "umbrella" of NATO which, if anything, they would like to see extended to that of the UN.

However, this is not to say that the UN was totally deprived of power by these Washington-based decisions. Between 1950 and 1953, despite the impotent objections of the Kremlin and its supporters, the "blue berets" were directly

involved in the war in Korea which cost a million lives. It doesn't take much imagination to guess on which side.

**Representative "pluralism" and executive "totalitarianism":
the "democracy" of the UN = imperialist capital dictatorship**

It can be said, however, that the UN has subsequently opened its doors to the ex-colonialist countries which have, since the end of the Second World War, represented a heroic example of anti-colonialist struggle. This is true. But the UN has always **sanctioned** this historical result **after** its achievement by armed struggle, and has always maintained a rigorous attitude of **non-support** in the face of "coloured" populations (with the exception of those cases in which Anglo-French influence was replaced by the "non-colonialist" penetration of American capital - which, when necessary, is capable of demonstrating that it is "anti-colonialist"). Moreover, whenever the UN has decided to intervene in "hot" areas, it has always been involved in suffocating the more radical revolutionary movements (as was the case in the Congo, where Lumumba was killed with the approval of the "blue berets").

It is true that the recently emancipated colonies entered the UN. However, they were represented by that national bourgeoisie which effectively recognised the "Balkanisation" imposed by the imperialists and, in more than one case, was personally responsible for the massacre of domestic radical forces (that is, in line with the UN and the imperialists).

Nevertheless, do they still represent a positive contradiction in the heart of the UN? Yes, but **only** because this reluctant and side-tracked anti-imperialism, which has never really followed through, is continuously rekindled by the antagonisms aroused by the increasingly violent course of imperialism (the same thing can be said of China which, after having rightly extinguished its anti-imperialist fire, was admitted to the UN in 1971). These are the **representatives of defeat**, given that they are hostages in a situation that prevents them from exercising that "sovereign power" which they would possess under superficially "normal" or "balanced" conditions, and which is therefore continuously under pressure from the masses. Of course, they use so often their vote to make a "proud protest" against an imperialist invasion to which the UN does not "fully" respond according to its "principles". But it is also obvious that this is nothing other than an attempt to keep the internal masses quiet and to establish, by means of this turbulence which needs to be given some crumb in order to be **kept quiet**, a better negotiating position **within the context of its imperialist dependence**.

It is equally logical that the masses who would like to be, and will be, capable of relaunching the struggle on their own ground and with adequate means, will have to pass over the bodies of their so-called official representatives

and that of the "legality" of UN "world government". In this case (and the first example is already before our eyes), the UN will certainly know how to put into practice its delegated powers as "protector of justice and the peace": against such an uprising, the international counter-revolutionary front would unite as one man (remember the front against the Commune?) in order to impose its supreme "legality" - as much that of the effective sovereignty of the imperialist metropoli as that of the **dependent** ex-colonial national bourgeoisies.

On an abstract statistical level, it can be said that the interests of the overwhelming majority of the countries currently represented at the UN **do not coincide** (and in fact conflict) with those of the imperialists. Some good souls might draw the conclusion that this will lead to a "majority", and therefore "winning" expression of genuine democracy.

The same could be said of the majority of people in any country who, not being involved in the interests of the handful of hyper-capitalists at the helm, could theoretically and "democratically" elect an adequate "alternative".

This is precisely the "parliamentary cretinism" flailed by Lenin: associating it with the UN is simply transferring it to the level of ... "universal cretinism".

**The struggle for the emancipation of the oppressed peoples and classes
does not pass through the "parliament" of the UN,
but takes place outside and against it**

The Theses of the Second Congress of the Communist International declared:

"For the communists of today, parliament can in no way be considered an arena of the struggle for reform or the improvement of the situation of the working classes";

"in the current conditions of unbridled imperialism, parliament has been transformed into one of many instruments of mendacity, deceit, oppression and exhausting verbosity";

*"the centre of gravity of today's political life has been **totally and absolutely** shifted beyond the confines of parliament";*

*"parliamentarianism as a state system is a form of "democratic" **dominion** on the part of the bourgeoisie who, at a certain stage in their development, feel the need for the **fiction** of a classless organisation of the "people's will" which is, in reality, only **a machine for subjugation and oppression** in the hands of prevailing capitalism".*

How can this be, if the principle of "one man, one vote" holds true, and that the interests of the vast majority of the population are at odds with those of a small handful of magnates?

For the simple reason that **unless** this "majority" puts the centre of gravity

of its own actions outside the limits of parliament (as **symmetrically** as does the bourgeoisie), the capitalist order will continue to appear as the "natural" order within which (and **only** within which) it is possible to claim something for themselves. It is upon this basis that capitalism articulates its power in a network of interests to which "all of the people" is (differently, sure) bound and by which all the "popular strata" have, in certain given situations, something to gain **effectively**. And such a mechanism, which increasingly reinforces the concentration and centralisation of bourgeois forces, disconnects the clarity and cohesion of the working class. It is for precisely this reason that the proletariat can only become itself (and draw with it the vaster "popular" masses) by acting not as a group of "citizens" but **as a class**, accepting that its own centre of gravity must be positioned within a **struggle** which will strike at the heart the force of its antagonist; both of them being "totally and definitively" beyond parliamentary bounds.

And what happens within the parliament of the UN? If we "sociologically" group the different countries making it up, how many intermediate figures do we find who are, in any case, subject to an imperialist domination which, in abstract terms, have "nothing to do with them"? What happens? The individual countries, or groups of countries, which are up to their eyes in debt with metropolitan capital and who need to put themselves even more in debt in order to ... "progress", literally sell themselves out to the imperialists whenever they have something to gain. Perhaps, as still happens today, because they are "sincerely" convinced that the instability of the international order "provoked by Iraq" reflects negatively on **their own** future, and should thus be cancelled. At a higher level, don't we see the same thing happening with the USSR? What is it that (albeit conditionally) has put Moscow so in line with Washington? The exhausting verbosity of democratic "exchanges of opinion", or the concrete pressure of financial capital and its power (unwritten in any legal or ethical code) for blackmail? Where does their **centre of gravity** lie? And if the Cuban "Leninists" of "socialismo o muerte" can find nothing better than to wash their hands in the face of the struggle in course, how else can this be explained except as an attempt to preserve a space in which to "construct their own socialism" by avoiding a too frontal collision with their dangerous American enemy? And what is this if it is not a type of sub-renting themselves out to imperialism?

The oppressed part of "humanity" (that is to say, the **oppressed classes**) can make itself count only by **breaking the effective rules of dominion** that are **retransmitted** and **sanctioned** by the "super-parliament" and "super-state" (fictitious) of the UN. This presupposes an **international struggle** led by an **international centre** which, by its very nature is **incompatible** with the "legal" framework of the UN, the imperialist centres which dictate its laws and "even" those "peripheral" centres which are exploited by imperialism but **bow down** before it.

The USSR was admitted to the League of Nations in 1934, **after** the fires of October had been quenched; China joined the UN in 1971 **after** having abandoned its objective of an anti-imperialist bourgeois-democratic revolution brought forward up to its extreme; the ex-colonies, at various dates, **after** having been delivered into the hands of their national bourgeoisies. The representative "ecumenical" nature of the UN is **the consequence** of a spread of the effective "ecumenism" of imperialist domination.

The "legality" of the UN quickly faded when it was time for it to adopt its role as "international policeman" in Korea and (on many occasions before the present) in the Middle East; when it gave "the green light" to American businesses in Vietnam and to those of the whole of the West in the Iran-Iraq "*affaire*" (another million deaths!). There were no "blue berets" to defend Grenada or Panama, nor were they called upon to come to the aid of "legality" by either an Ingrao or a Cossutta.

A USSR which had proceeded along the October road would not, **by definition**, have found any of the doors of the League of Nations or the UN open to it, but would have provoked the setting up of a "community" (and related super-*gendarmerie*) of great and small bourgeois powers against itself and the international revolutionary movement.

The revolutionary movement **which is to come**, wherever and however it **finds its beginnings**, will have to face the same problem: the only "representativeness" which will be conceded to it will be that of arms.

And anybody who doesn't "understand" the fact cannot hope to be considered a naive *Candide*; only as someone who has sold out to the enemy.

(From "Che Fare", No. 19, September-October 1991)

KUWAIT: AN ARTIFICIAL "STATE" CREATED BY COLONIALISM

Western propaganda repeatedly hammers the same key: the occupation and annexation of Kuwait by Iraq cannot be tolerated because Kuwait is a "sovereign state". Kuwait's economic and financial "sovereignty" is discussed elsewhere in this journal; here, we shall briefly outline the creation of Kuwait as an "independent state" in order to demonstrate that it is nothing but an artificial product of colonialism.

Before the birth of the "state" of Kuwait (in 1961), there is no trace of a Kuwaiti "**nation**" which is in any **distinct** (in terms of economics, political institutions, race or - even less - language) from the populations of Mesopotamia or, more generally, from those of Arabia as a whole. The city of al-Kuwait was founded, at the end of the XVII century, by nomadic tribes coming from the interior of the Arab peninsula. Its population increased, as did its commercial importance, as a result of the migratory movements provoked by the Persian occupation of Mesopotamia. As time passed, relations with Basra (a river port which was little suited to the military and mercantile fleets of the period) were consolidated because al-Kuwait represented a precious outlet to the sea. Sheiks of the Sabah family governed Kuwait after the middle of the XVIII century, and became part of the Ottoman Empire. For the Ottoman Sultan who nominated him, the sheik of Kuwait was a *caimakan* - a lower-rank functionary who acted as the local representative of the Governor of Basra. Al-Kuwait was to remain under Basra governorship until the end of the nineteenth century.

Nothing apparently changed, even when Great Britain imposed its protectorate over the city in 1899. From that moment, however, British imperialism (not the indigenous population!) began to exert open and concealed pressure in order to make al-Kuwait an entity in itself. The underlying reason for this was the explosion of the rivalry with Wilhelm II of Germany for a port on the Persian Gulf. Between 1888 and 1898, the Deutsche Bank had prepared and set under way the ambitious Berlin-Byzantium-Baghdad railway project as a means for the penetration of German capital into Turkey and Arabia. After his visit to

Palestine in 1898, it was the Emperor himself who pressed for an extension of the railway to Basra and the immediate beginning of the construction of the final stretch (which a knowing hand had, in the meantime, further extended to Kuwait ...). In order to block this project (and, more specifically, the possibility that the railway reached the sea), Great Britain asked to participate directly in the *Baghdadbahngesellschaft*; at the same time, it protected itself by ensuring its mandate over Kuwait and by initiating negotiations with the Ottoman Empire in order to obtain the "autonomy" of the contested city (the first request dates from 1909).

The defeat of Germany in the First World War temporarily attenuated the danger to Great Britain of German competition in the Near and Middle East. The victorious Powers divided the spoils of the defunct Ottoman Empire. This division, whose main lines were established by the notorious Sykes-Picot agreement in May 1916 and substantially confirmed by the Treaty of Sèvres in August 1920, responded to two of the interests of imperialist capitalism: it was **anti-Arab** and, on another level, **anti-Socialist**. The French and British governments divided Arabia and the Middle East into the greatest possible number of "parts" both by consolidating the old administrative sub-divisions dating from the period of Turkish domination, and by predisposing the birth of new states undermined *ab origine* by the fact that their borders did not take into account the history of the past and by the fact that they were a medley of different races and nationalities (among which the colonial powers were always ready to rekindle contrasts and conflicts). Both old and new colonialisms acted (and act) with the intention of **obstructing the establishment of a great united Arab state**. This is not so much because imperialist states are worried by the possibility (however improbable) that Arab capitalism might become strong enough to take revenge on the predatory West, but because they are aware that the formation of such a state (weak as a bourgeois state) would play a **doubly positive role in the cause of the proletarian revolution**. On the one hand, it would encourage the movement towards the unification of the exploited Arabs; on the other, it would foment the proletarian class struggle in a Europe forced to its knees by the loss of the immense reservoir of super-profits represented by the Arab area. It is for these reasons (and this is the imperialist origin of "international law") that a "Jewish homeland" was laid in Palestine, that the ancient unity of Syria was broken up, that Lebanon was invented and then unequally divided according to religious lines, that the "national rights" of the Kurds and Armenians were verbally recognised but concretely denied, that the Arab peninsula was fragmented, etc.

Although it was not to be formalised until 40 years later, **the detachment of Kuwait from Iraq is a perfect example of this approach**. When, after the first nationalist insurrections, Great Britain was forced to concede the appearance of independence to Iraq (1921), the position of Kuwait remained totally ambiguous. Even Faisal I (placed on the throne of Baghdad by the British

themselves) and the government of Nuri Al Said (extremely servile towards Western interests) declared that Kuwait was to be considered an Iraqi **province** and very timidly attempted to extend their jurisdiction. London was opposed to the idea. The first successes in the search for oil (begun jointly in 1934 by the Anglo-Persian Oil Company and America's Gulf Oil Corporation) led to this position being held more rigidly. As more oil was discovered, British capitalism and its new American majority partner became increasingly less willing to let Kuwait out of its hands.

In July 1958, a popular revolutionary movement overthrew the envassalled Hashemite monarchy. This development (which also led to the nationalisation of Iraqi oil resources) and the increasing attraction of pan-Arab nationalism encouraged Anglo-American imperialism to substitute the more sickening colonial forms of domination in order to **better protect** in changing times **the continuation of its robbery**. In June 1961, the British government granted "independence" to Kuwait. Kassem's Iraq protested strongly, but took no concrete action. But the British and, paradoxically enough, also the Arab League (for various reasons, even more than today) took up arms in order to prevent any possible initiative on the part of the nationalist government of Baghdad. Despite the support of the USSR which condemned the "aggression" of this British military "adventure" (we report the fact without, **of course**, suggesting any revaluation of Khrushchevism), Iraq soon bowed down before the *de facto* accomplishment of imperialism. But this is clearly not enough to give historical "legitimacy" to a "state" which is **an invention of imperialist capital**. On the contrary, it is precisely these thirty years of "independence" which have pushed the contradiction to its extreme and led to its final explosion.

Democracy in progress?

Another of the "arguments" of Western propaganda is that the "dictatorial" regime of Saddam has interrupted the **development** of what was, at least in part, a democratic state. It was, sure, a "*gagged democracy*" ("Corriere della Sera", 6 August); there it was only the beginnings of democracy, pedantically confirms "l'Unità". The truth is that little has been said on this subject because of the obsequiousness due to that *élite* of kings, sheiks, emirs and hereditary princes that the democracies are honoured to have on their side: a little counter-information may not be out of place.

It is taken for granted that Kuwait had a constitutional or parliamentary monarchy. In Europe, this brings to mind today's monarchies in Great Britain, Spain, Holland, Sweden or Belgium (two centuries after the French Revolution ...), where legislative power is formally in the hands of a universally elected Parliament and the monarch is more or less a figurehead. But the

situation in Kuwait was a little different from that of the European bourgeois monarchies (in any case, hardly symbols to be exalted for the proletariat).

To begin with, the National Assembly is not elected on the basis of universal suffrage. Only well-educated (i.e. wealthy) men whose origins in Kuwait go back to before 1920 have the right to vote. According to the estimates of Garaudy, this represents **no more than 8% of the population** resident in Kuwait - little more than the approximately 90,000 members of the 15 "families" or clans which possess 100% of the wealth of the Emirate. Furthermore, they represent only something like 30% of all of the "real" citizens of Kuwait. Given that political parties are forbidden (as well as trade unions), it is possible to vote only for individuals. Despite this, it was twice able to form a small opposition (orders from the social subsoil!) inspired towards the mid-70's by Arab nationalism and, towards the mid-80's, by "Islamic integralism". In both cases the Emir autocratically dissolved the Assembly. Recently (16 July this year), he decided to abolish it altogether, replacing it with a provisional National Council appointed by himself.

Putting aside the "powers" of the defunct Assembly (it is enough to know that only the Emir had the power to appoint or dismiss the government - which, in any case, was made up mainly of members of the Sabah family), we can consider the instructive question of **citizenship**. Contrary to what is usually said, not 40% but only 28% of the approximately 1,800,000 residents of Kuwait have rights of citizenship. In 1989, Kuwaitis of "nomadic origin and without nationality" were excluded from obtaining citizenship and dismissed from state employment (for which citizenship is compulsory), and their children were expelled from the public schools (as Richard Foltz's letter of protest published in the "International Herald Tribune" of 17 August pointed out). Furthermore, in 1966, the "democratic" National Assembly of Kuwait decided that no more than ... 50 people a year could be naturalised. If it is borne in mind that, excluding government positions, Kuwait citizens make up only 1.6% of the labour force and that all of the exploited workers are non-Kuwaitis, is it exaggerated to conclude that the tender semi-democratic shoot crushed by the tank-tracks of Iraq was nothing other than **an infamous exploitative apartheid regime** constructed to protect the safes of Western banks and multinational companies and the "eternal holidays" of a plethora of regal Arab parasites?

We are not here to call for a real bourgeois democracy for Kuwait. The same objective socio-economic contradictions which prevent the bourgeois themselves from introducing such a regime, in fact, require a "more advanced" commitment from the exploited and the proletariat of the Gulf. We would only remind you of the unbounded hypocrisy of people who, having celebrated the advent of democracy in Eastern Europe with nauseous parties, now march

without batting an eyelash towards a war which is intended to replace His Excellency, the Emir Sabah on his throne.

(From "Che Fare", No. 19, September- October 1990)

What follows is the text of a flysheet in Arabic distributed by us in the sector of the procession made up of immigrants and students from the Middle East at the demonstration held in Rome on 12 December 1990

ضِدَّ الْعُدْوَانِ الْأَمْرِيكِيِّ عَلَى الْجَمَاهِيرِ الْعَرَبِيَّةِ الْمُسْتَعْلَقَةِ

موجهة الحرس والعُدوان الأميركي في هذه الفترة محاولة إخضاع البروليتاريا للمصالح الأميركية الرأسمالية .

بعض وسائل الإعلام تحاول تبرير التدخل الغربي كمحاولة للدفاع عن « الديمقراطية » و « القانون الدولي » ضد « الدكتاتور » في بغداد . ولكن إلى جانب هذا التبرير وبشكل أكثر وضوح يتم التحدث عن « مناطق حيوية » بالنسبة للمصالح الأميركية . في منطقته مثل الشرق الأوسط ليس من الصعب فهم عن أية مصالح يتم الكلام : البترول ، أسعاره والسيطرة عليه . مجلة النيويورك تايمز نفسها تكتب (كما جاء في مهيئته الوحدة الإيطالية في ٨/٧) : « الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية لم ترسل قواتها إلى الصحراء في المملكة العربية السعودية بهدف الدفاع عن الملوك والذمراء الديماغوجيين . بل أن السياسة الأمريكية يصفها خيرات تلك البلاد بالاضمان ، الدفاع عن الحكومة الموالية للأمريكان محاولة ضرب كل من يريد رفع أسعار البترول ... وهذا فقد تم إرسال تلك القوات ليس لمواجهة إعتداء ، وإنما بهدف مساعدة دوله هي عضو في الوبيل والتي بدورها تحافظ على المصالح البترولية الغربية » .

إن النظام العالمي الذي فرضته الأمم المتحدة ، والذي من خلاله تتواجد كافة القوى الأميركية ، الولايات المتحدة وأوروبا على رأسهم (إيطاليا في الصف الأول) هذا النظام لا يخدم إلا في خضوع سياسة العُدوان المسلح المهادنة لسرقة واضطهاد الجماهير العربية (وليس هذا فقط) حيث أنه وبسبب التواجد « الحضاري » للغرب في منطقته الخليج ، نالت الجماهير العربية لن تحصل إلا على المزيد من الفقر والجوع .

إذاً ليصبح واضحاً كيف أن العُدوان الغربي لم يكن هدفه إعادة « السيادة » المظروحة لدولته حتى « (أي دولة الكويت) ، ولكن الهدف الحقيقي موجته ضد أية ثورة قد يقوم بها المضطهدون في « العالم العربي » .

ولهذا فالصراع الدائر حالياً ليس بين الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية ونظام صدام حسين وإنما هو صراع ما بين الغرب ومصالحه (وأتباعه أينما كانوا) من جهة ، ومن الجبهة الأخرى الجماهير العربية المستغلبة (وبشكل عام ما يسمى بالعالم الثالث والعالم الرابع) . ولهذا فإن المعتدي الحقيقي هو المعتدي الأميركي .

ولهذا فليس من الغريب أن الجماهير الفقيرة في المنطقة (على رأسهم الفلسطينيين ، وكردن ، جماهير الأردن ، سوريا ، الجزائر وإيران ...) أعلنت صوتهن وعرضنهن ضد المعتدي الأميركي

حيث أن التحركات الجماهيرية عكست بشكل طبيعي حقيقة ما يدور هنا .
إنما هذه الحقيقة ، نرى وتنتهي لعملية التزييف والابتزاز ولعن يدعي بأن القوى
العربية المناهضة للغرب يجب هزيمتها نظراً لكونها تحت هيمنة «هتلر الجديد» .
مع العلم أن الغرب وللعديد من السنين ، قام بعقد الصفقات مع ما يسمى بـ «صنار» ، ولهذا
فإن الغرب يتحمل مسؤولية مقتل أكثر من مليون شخص خلال الحرب مع إيران - إيران
التي قامت بها ثورة شعبية مناهضة للامبريالية - بالرغم من كل هذا فإنه من الواجب التأكيد

بأن السبب في رغبة صدام حسين كقائد للتحركات ودورات الجماهير العربية ، هو
عائد إلى العزلة التي فرضت على هذه الجماهير بسبب «عدم اهتمام البروليتاريا
في الغرب بهذه الجماهير ، بالإضافة لتأمر السياسة الغربية مع الأمر باليه .
هذا التأمر الذي يبدو واضحاً الآن أكثر من ذي قبل ، مُعْتَبَرُ عنه بإرسال القوات العسكرية
إلى الخليج .

نتميز نرى المواقف المتخذة من قبل الحزب الشيوعي الإيطالي متأرجحة ومتميزة بعدم الثبات
وقلة الوضوح ، تحت شعارات غامضة مثل «السلام» ، «نظام عالمي أكثر عدل» ، «حكومة
عالمية» . وينفس الوقت يقول الحزب «الدفاع عن المصالح الوطنية والغربية» . وبالتالي فإن
شعارات غامضة كهذه لا تغني عن حقيقة المواقف واستمرارية العدوان ضد العرب .

حيث نرى أن الحزب الشيوعي الإيطالي بعد أن اعتبر المبادرة الأمريكية كـ «مؤامرة
للدخول على التهربات العراقية» (سبب تصريحات أحد زعماء الحزب نابوليتانو) ، وضع فيما بعد شروطه
الوحيد لموقفه وتأييده لأمريكا فهو قبول الأمم المتحدة بما تقدم به أمريكا .

لكن حقيقة الوضع لا تتغير سواء قام بالاعتداء بعض القوى الامبريالية بشكل انفرادي أو
كان لا يتأخر بشكل جماعي وتحت اسم منظمه عالمية (أي الأمم المتحدة) ! بالتالي فإن استدعاء
الأمم المتحدة باعتبارها تجبر حقيقي «للنظام العالمي» الجديد يشكل خيبة أمل لذلك الذي يحارون
تغطية احداهم ومصالحهم بالشرعية الدولية ، المتمثلة بما يمكن أن تقوم به هذه المنظمات .

إن الامكانية الوحيدة للجماهير العربية هو «التحرر من هيمنة صدام حسين» . وبشكل أن حالة
الثورات والانتفاضات تمتد وتعمق مع ضرورة توفير الدعم لها من طرف القوى البروليتارية في الغرب .
إن البروليتاريا في الغرب تجد في حركة الجماهير العربية حليف صادق من أجل سحق وهم
الاستغلال ، حيث أن الظروف الحالية تزيد وتعمق من عملية الاستغلال السياسي والاقتصادي
ويبدو أحداً من خلال ملاحظته تصريحات اصحاب المصانع ، والحكومة ، هذه التصريحات
التي تريد وتطلب من البروليتاريا المزيد والمزيد من التضحيات الجسام .

إن العالم الامبريالي الذي يعيش في أزمة الرأسمالية يحاول تحميل هذه الأزمة على عاتق
الجماهير الفقيرة في جنوب العالم والتي تعاني من (الدين الحاد ، نزاري وارتفاع اسعار المواد الأولية) بالرغم
من ذلك فإن هذه الأزمة تعود من جديد لتظهر بشكل واضح من ذي قبل حيث المحاولات الخبيثة
للعالم الامبريالي لورغاء البروليتاريا لوضع ثقل هذه الأزمة التي تواجهها الرأسمالية .

في إطار هذا الصنع فإن البروليتاريا في الغرب لا يمكن ولن تقدم تلك المصالح والتي من أجلها
تم إرسال سُفُن الحرب والعدوان إلى الخليج - وينفس الوقت فإن البروليتاريا لن تقف صوفياً
حيادياً ، وكأن الصراع الدائر حالياً لا يحسبوا - وبناءً على ذلك فالمطلوب هو الوضوح إلى
جانب الجماهير العربية المستغلّة والمضطهدة من قبل الامبريالية .

للشعب الشيوعي العالمي

The following is the text of a leaflet distributed by our organization at a "pacifist" meeting at the end of January 1991, a few days after the outbreak of the Gulf war.

**AGAINST THE IMPERIALIST WAR AND THE
"PEACE" IT IS PREPARING.
ONLY THE STRUGGLE OF
THE WESTERN PROLETARIAT AT THE SIDE OF
THE EXPLOITED ARAB MASSES
CAN RESOLVE THE PROBLEMS CREATED BY
IMPERIALISM IN THE MIDDLE EAST.**

Today in this piazza, tomorrow in thousands of others, we are demonstrating and we'll continue to demonstrate against a bloody and infamous war - and against the participation of "our" country (on the orders of "our" bourgeoisie which, in order to protect its own imperialist interests, considers the cost of a few billion lire of arms and a little "home-grown" human cannon fodder a good investment "in the name of international law" and "the fatherland").

But if we really want our demonstrations to have a sense, we must first of all ask ourselves why this war was not stopped in time. It's at this point that we say: certainly, the determining factor in the outbreak of the war was the decided "will" (i.e. interest) of whoever squeezed the trigger; but if this has been as easy as we have seen, it is because that trigger-happy "somebody" was not opposed in the right way and at the right time - because the "pacifist movement", in all of its different forms, was incapable of understanding the facts or had a distorted perception of them - and because, as a consequence, there was an absence of any real interlocutors to refer to and any real objectives about which to mobilise.

The first lie by which we allowed ourselves to be trapped was that Iraq's invasion of Kuwait was a violation of an "international law" which had to be re-established.

But what kind of "sovereign state" has Kuwait ever been? It is nothing other than the result of the borders of the Arab ex-colonies laid down by imperialism in order to divide the Arab nation as it saw fit. The geographical map of the

Middle East is nothing but an example of this arbitrary and artificial design.

What's more, the bourgeoisie knows and openly declares that, after having "granted" independence, it was only by "Balkanising" the Middle East that we could keep it under control. Kuwait? A piece of ground stripped from its original earth, not in order to establish another sovereign Arab state, but in order to be able to use the fiction of its sovereignty as a justification for imperialist economic, political and military control over the whole region. A "country" rented out to imperialism, where the indigenous and "foreign" population (the latter being the great majority and consisting of **workers** of various races and languages) is deprived of any political or trade union rights. **Slaves on two counts:** to the **internal vassals** (a repugnant family of sheiks, related by money to all of the ... international sheiks of capital) and to the real, **external masters** (of which Italy is certainly not the last).

The fact that Saddam set out on the conquest (or re-annexation) of Kuwait for bourgeois interests of state and that his regime deserves absolutely no enthusiasm from us is another thing. No bourgeoisie has ever done anything for any other reason and the same *Risorgimento*-type claims for national unity have never corresponded to anything else. But there is no doubt that, in this case, Iraq's re-annexation of the Kuwaiti puppet-statelet is part of a revolutionary process which puts in question the dismemberment of the Arab nation carried out by imperialism and, consequently, the imperialist "order" that lies behind it. We may regret that this process is being advanced (totally inconsequently and among a thousand contradictions) by such a non-exemplary regime as that of Iraq - which on thousands of other occasions has been guilty of the worst iniquities against internal class movements and even of the Arab-Islamic "national" cause itself (look at the thousands of Iraqi communists assassinated and the war unleashed against Iran under the guidance and to the exclusive advantage of imperialism, etc.); but it is criminal to say that this is a violation of "international law". We shall leave this kind of prose to the protectors of imperialist rights. They can speak like this because it is a question of **their** law, their sources of supply and exploitation. For "pacifists" to use the same language is a nonsense and, in fact, has only served to provide the bourgeoisie with the arms **to justify the war before it starts** and **mobilise** "consciences" in its favour, without paying any regard to the "peaceful" options of their ignorant fellow travellers.

It is certainly not a result to be proud of!

The **second lie**, immediately consequent to the first, has been to reduce the conflict to a battle between Saddam and the rest of the ... (naturally "free") world. It would have been sufficient to have reduced Saddam to reason ("peacefully" according to the pacifists; by "all available means" according to the rest) and everything would have been as it was before.

By occupying Kuwait, the Rais of Baghdad has done nothing other than lift the lid from a boiling pot: a pot which represents **the whole** of an Arab-

Islamic world which is **against imperialism, against their domestic regimes** (more or less dependent upon imperialism), **against the Israeli imperialist outpost** on Arab soil. What the West means by "bringing Saddam to reason" is to crush Iraq in order to give a lesson to all of the exploited masses in the area. Was the war avoidable? **Yes**, in the short term - if Saddam had accepted an **unconditional surrender** and returned to imperialism, **not only Kuwait, but also the independence of Iraq itself**. No, not at all, in the long run - because the conflict between imperialism and the exploited Arab-Islamic masses is constantly and increasingly heading towards war, regardless of who the "protagonists" are.

Keeping silent about the real sense of this pre-existing conflict, or trying to exorcise it from behind the screen of the "particular" question of Kuwait has been much more than a simple error.

The **third lie** (we continue to use this euphemism): the responsible for the "re-establishment of the violated order" should be the UN because it represents the "universal consensus of the nations" and prefigures the "new world government" about which so much idle talk has been spent over the last few years.

So, after having disguised or deformed the real reasons behind the conflict in the Gulf, what has been described by Marxists as a "den of international brigands" has become the potential instrument of an international police (aseptic, above the parts ...). Strange thing, this "neutral" police force - that had nothing to say about Grenada, Panama, the bombing of Tripoli, the guerilla war of the CIA-paid Contras, the occupation of the Palestinian territories, etc., etc! But strange, too, are the "pacifists" who have turned to it to re-establish order "democratically" and "without bloodshed" (which is like asking a butcher for a vegetarian recipe).

And also strange are those "semi-pacifists" who have had recourse to the UN in order to set against the USA, the real masters of the situation, the "different" interests of Italy or Europe (not imperialist? or only imperialist of a second order and **therefore** to be supported against the USA?).

And what *savoir faire* to propose as an alternative to war, a "peaceful" embargo capable of starving out the Iraqi people!

Only after having taken in these three lies (we still don't want to use the word **crimes**), there was the beginning of a reaction to the fact that things were going very differently from the way it had been imagined. Then ... then, the war broke out for real: something that nobody "imagined", nobody "wanted" and everybody "abhors" - but which still exists (and how!), and exists because it was not opposed it as it should have been opposed or, even, because a door was left open for it.

Today, it is easy for anybody who is not hypnotised for life by bourgeois "values" to see that, even at the level of declarations of intent, it is no longer a case of re-establishing "legitimate" power in Kuwait, but of crushing an entire

people (the people of Iraq); of terrorising and, if necessary, of putting to the fire and the sword any other people or country in the region which dares to rebel against the "international order"; of sanctioning direct imperialist control of the whole area (given that indirect control by means of the down-at-heel sheiks is no longer enough).

An imperialist war to the end, with its piles of enemy civilians assassinated like mad dogs (they don't count; what's the value of thousands of them against just one of ours who was, perhaps, only maltreated in "contempt of the Geneva Convention"?).

An imperialist war to the end, with its chauvinist fanfares and "national fronts" in which it seems that everybody (including subversives) is expected to take part.

A war in which the deflagration of hypocrisy and lies is no less intense and dangerous as that caused by the bombs.

The war, this war, has broken out. There is no way of turning back. There is no previous "peace" to be re-established, because it was precisely this peace that contained the reasons for the war itself. The reasoning of "pacifists" (and here we are talking about sincere pacifists, which do not bow down to the "reasons" of war) has been burnt out before time: not because the war has broken out **despite** it, but because the war has broken out without any reckonings being paid in the metropoli **thanks** to it (at least in part).

It is now necessary to go on; arrive at the enemy's front line. But it is first necessary to understand **where** and **who** is the enemy.

We Communist Internationalists have a very clear position in this regard. We repeat it today, among the cannons' roar, just as we repeated it yesterday, when everybody was talking about a "possible peace" (everybody: those who were concretely preparing for the war as well as those who stupidly believed that it could be avoided by accepting the bourgeois pacifist *ratio*):

1) The aggressor is imperialist capitalism (if you want to use geographic terminology, the West - from the USA to Europe to Japan - with the support of the Soviet ex-"Socialist fatherland" paid for with a handful of peanuts).

2) The object of this aggression are the exploited masses of the controlled and dominated countries of the Middle East (and the rest of the world) and, at the same time, the metropolitan proletariat which is their natural class brother and should, therefore, be involved in "our" war front because it is the infallible means by which the world-wide antagonist class forces can be divided and overcome, **particularly now that capitalism is going through another moment of deep crisis which demands iron-clad internal discipline and involves a further depression of the rights and living conditions of the exploited.**

3) **For imperialism**, the real danger in the Middle East is not Saddam Hussein, **but a spread of the revolt** of the Arab-Islamic masses **throughout the region, its radicalisation, its capacity - finally - to take** into its own hands **the destiny of the anti-imperialist war, by overcoming the artificial**

state boundaries which keep them bound to imperialism and their "national" bourgeoisies (including that of Iraq!).

4) And here, in the metropoli, the real danger is **the proletariat** and the possibility that **the "national front" breaks precisely where capitalist production and wealth has its source**; in the possibility that the proletariat will be capable of standing up and offering a programmed course of action to those members of the other classes who feel that they have a duty to oppose the current slaughter.

5) If we want to have peace, this can only be obtained by means of a precise **class war** against those who, by their very nature, continuously encourage and spread the wars themselves, reducing every moment of peace to **peace exclusively in the metropoli** while never ceasing to squeeze blood and sweat from the "Southern World". Affirming **our** reasons for peace, then, means first **breaking the internal social peace** which binds us to bourgeois ideology and the war machine.

6) The first thing that we need to be able to do is to give our unconditional support to the revolt of the Arab-Islamic masses. Unconditional = independently of whoever and however it is monopolised at any given time - even if it involves a Saddam Hussein (against whom, we repeat, **we** have a thousand criticisms to make: the same things that have, in the past, made him a **good neighbour and optimum client** of imperialism), just as, here in the metropoli, we unconditionally support our proletariat even when they submit to a bourgeois direction of the "movement".

7) In no case should we ever withdraw our support - and this is even more true in the case that our Arab-Islamic class brothers resort to "terrorism" against more or less "indiscriminate" objectives "on our territory": if they are forced to go so far (or not so far ...), this is **exclusively** due to the **isolation** to which we have condemned them. We know of no other means of avoiding the recourse to "terrorism" than the establishment of a real and united class front which breaks down "racial" and "national" barriers and substitutes them with class barriers.

8) In particular, the maximum effort must be made to help Arab-Islamic immigrants to organise and defend themselves, strong in the knowledge of our solidarity, from the **legal** prevarications and the "illegal" offences to which they are subjected (already translated into a "**popular Arab manhunt**" in France, for example). On the basis of this, it will be possible to reconstruct a **unity of language, intent and struggle** between us and them, without which we cannot even begin to speak about opposing the war here.

9) Given these premises, we must immediately mobilise ourselves in every possible way **against the participation of our - imperialist - country in the war**. The internal social and political front must be fractured from top to bottom. We are not among those who wave vacuous articles of the Constitution in order to establish the "illegality" of the war; we do not "ask" that "our"

government withdraws from the Gulf; and even less do we try to convince them or "public opinion" that this war "has nothing to do with Italy". No, it **has everything to do** with the bourgeois gang in power; it does not concern and repels the exploited and anyone else who seriously intends fighting against imperialist butchery. The withdrawal of "our" armed forces from the Gulf can only be brought about as the result of a clear and decided class struggle which **as such** is aimed **against imperialism** in general **insofar** as it is aimed against the **"Enemy No. 1"** at "home"!

A **first link** in the chain is **to prevent the costs of the war from being off-loaded onto the backs of the "people"** (first and foremost, on the backs of the **proletariat**). We don't want to pay for a war which is not ours! We want to **force you to withdraw from the Gulf!** We want to strip you of the power that you exercise against us **here!** We call for a **general strike** which will put "our" trade union leaders with their backs against the wall!

10) Yes, we intend to "disobey". Disobedience does not mean doing things "individually", in the secret recesses of your "conscience"; nor even trusting in the laws, Constitutional tables or legal offices supposed to "defend" this presumed "right".

It means **collective self-organisation** in order to assert **our force** in the class struggle which is beginning (which is either **revolutionary** or **nothing**). We reject the hypocritical (and a little suspect) "disobedience" which is, in the final analysis, nothing more than a "personal" refusal to participate in the war and which does nothing to really fight against either the military potential which Italy is experimenting in the Gulf, or the internal social and political organisation upon which such potential is based.

It is true that we have not been able to prevent the outbreak of the war; but we will not have lost everything if we manage to give clarity and continuity to the movement opposed to it. Nor is it said that, in the case that imperialism triumphs once again and is capable of imposing the return of a "peace" which is no less disgusting and no less bloody than this war itself, our battle has been in vain. What has led to the present conflict is not destined to disappear, but is likely to spread beyond all imaginable measure. And this is the first reason for our existing and permanent commitment.

**NO TO THE IMPERIALIST WAR!
NO TO IMPERIALISM'S BLOODY "PEACES"!
UNITY BETWEEN
THE EXPLOITED MASSES OF THE "SOUTHERN WORLD"
AND THE METROPOLITAN PROLETARIAT!
WAR AGAINST WAR!
FOR INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISM!**

After Operation "Desert Massacre"

**IRAQ IS DEVASTATED AND DEFEATED,
BUT IMPERIALIST PEACE IN THE MIDDLE
EAST AND THE REST OF THE WORLD IS
FURTHER AWAY THAN BEFORE**

The "international policing operation" sponsored by the UN has, for the moment, come to an end. The American-led imperialist alliance has won. Once again the banners of the Western Emirs are raised over the "holy places" of Kuwait. Undisciplined Iraq has been cut to pieces, pushed back into the pre-industrial age and is still partially occupied. Imperialist capitalism's response to the exploited Arab-Islamic masses has been an even greater Deir Yassin. But the Imperialist Chancelleries should not delude themselves. Their "peace", which strangles all of the peoples of the Middle East, can do nothing but feed the revival of an "anti-imperialist" revolution which is still in its early stages. And this, by shaking the equally revolting social peace in the metropoli, will bring the proletariat back to the fore - a much more dangerous enemy for the imperialist bourgeoisie than any Saddam Hussein. Although the dominant propaganda gives it for dead, the revolutionary communist perspective is beginning to re-emerge (also thanks to events such as the Gulf War) as the only real alternative to the barbarism of capitalism in crisis.

The reactionaries and democrats of the imperialist countries can breathe a deep sigh of relief. Under the guidance of Bush's America, their "highly moral" commitment to returning the feudal autocrat of Kuwait to his throne has been successful. The UN can congratulate itself and its many fans, including those of the so-called "left". The international order violated by Iraq (or rather, the primacy of "our vital economic interests") has been restored **by all necessary means**, just as the UN requested.

In order to reach this objective - and here we must bow down before the

technological superiority of the West - it was only necessary to use that "minimum of force" which is so dear to the humanitarian scruples of the more than ever dishonourable European social democracies. Not a lot: just a few thousand tons more than the quantity of rigorously democratic bombs dropped by the "allies" on Germany **throughout the Second World War**. Just a 43-day "Storm". And, at the end, the kind of extremely light dessert which goes down so well at diplomatic luncheons: instead of the atomic crudeness of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the sophisticated aerosol **Fuel Air Explosive** bombs - the equivalent of tactical atomic weapons. But, as in 1945, only when **the war was over**.

Everything went "according to plan". And given that the official documents carefully avoid any reference to war, the "allied" Command did everything it could to make a war with no victims. There were hardly any on "our" side, and not many on "theirs" - no more than one or two hundred thousand deaths, we are assured. And given that we are talking about Arabs - and subjects of the "new Hitler" to boot - the unanimous opinion of the "free" press is that it was a **practically bloodless war**.

The destruction of Iraq, a warning to all exploited Arabs and Muslims

Sworn testimony (and what testimony!) to the success of the "surgical operation" is the same **capitalist-imperialist** consensus that set it under way. Martii Ahtisaari, the UN's envoy to Iraq, had this to say in his report:

*"Nothing we had seen or read had prepared us for the **particular form of devastation** which had occurred in the country. The conflict has had **almost apocalyptic effects** on an economic infrastructure which, up until January 1991, was that of a highly urbanised and mechanised society. Now, the **majority** of the economic means supporting modern life has been **weakened or destroyed**. Iraq has been **relegated to a pre-industrial condition** for a long time to come, but with all of the difficulties due to its post-industrial dependence on the intensive use of energy and technology".*

This is not only due to the most criminal bombardment in history. The sanctions which were so applauded by the "pacifists" as an alternative to armed conflict have also done their part. In particular, they have been an effective **means of starving** the people; as the above-mentioned report observes, **70%** of Iraq's food was imported. Without seeds, and with its livestock breeding severely damaged, a "*seriously compromised*" grain harvest and a lack of pesticides, fertilisers, fuel and spare parts for agricultural machinery, the same

United Nations, which disgustingly "legalised" the whole operation, declares that post-war Iraq is on the threshold of "**widespread hunger**". And, given the scientific destruction of its sewerage system and the deliberate pollution of its rivers, it is also on the threshold of "*a further imminent catastrophe which could include epidemics and famine*".

The experts of the City of London, one of the institutions which has most benefitted from this "noble war for peace", have tried to quantify the results. According to their satisfied assurances, it can be calculated

"that Iraq has lost 90 per cent of its industrial capacity, between 75 and 80 per cent of its refineries and that is virtually without food, sugar, fertilisers, steel and cement".

If to "*a frightening overseas debt (about 75 billion dollars)*" is added the even more frightening weight of war "reparations", it is obvious that Iraq is "**absolutely incapable of confronting a reconstruction which will require thousands of millions**". The handful of banks and petrol companies which decreed the birth of Kuwait in 1961, and which have never forgotten the affront of the 1958 popular uprising in Iraq and the consequent nationalisation programmes, can feel satisfied:

"With its own resources, Iraq will simply be incapable of surviving"
("La Stampa", 11 March 1991).

Not only has imperialist capital reacquired the immense oil reserves existing in Kuwait (240-260 years) and one of its financial strongholds, but Iraq itself is "at our feet" and its resources (above all, its oil and its labour force) have been effectively denationalised. The greater the foreign debt, in fact, the more despotic the rule of the creditors.

This imperialist celebration brings together both the **old** and **new** colonialism. The Stars and Stripes, once raised in the name of "anti-colonialism" and the "defence" of Nasser's Egypt, now washes the wounds suffered in Vietnam, Lebanon and Iran in the blood of the people of Iraq. Just as in "the good old days", the Union Jack flies over Arab territory, expressing all of its "domineering" pride. The "*grandeur*" of France (which has never been as little or as wretched as it is today) grazes once again in imperialist fields - now that its ex-Colonial Minister finds himself at the Elysée Palace. Even "peaceful" Italy has gained a place at the banquet of imperialist hyenas, thanks to the latest discoveries of military technology (the Tornado) and civilisation (professionals "born - and well-paid - to kill"). There was also, for a while, a reconciliation between the old enemies of yesterday, with "friend" Gorbachov as standard-bearer - **at the expense of the Iraqi masses and all of the people of the Middle East**, particularly the Kurds and the Palestinians.

The "particular form of devastation" imposed on Iraq is the most "solemn" warning that the imperialist Chancelleries (Washington in the fore) have given to the exploited Arab-Islamic masses since the time of the war in Algeria. "We will no longer tolerate -they seem to say all together- acts of rebellion which damage our interests, endanger our economic equilibrium or violate our right to consider the Middle East - and the rest of the world - as our vital space. We will no longer tolerate that even one hair on the heads of our faithful henchmen be touched; in fact, we will consider it as a challenge to our peace and order which will be punished, in the words of the UN, by all necessary means." It is unnecessary to say that this is a warning addressed **to all of the oppressed masses of the world, including the working classes of the metropoli.**

But the "united" imperialist victors cannot (and don't) delude themselves. They have only won a battle - and not without costs of various kinds. There are other battles waiting for them, and they will not all be so unequal ... and there are others that they are preparing themselves, given that the causes underlying anti-imperialist uprisings and the proletarian struggle against capitalism remain, and have even become more acute. It's enough to see the kind of peace which imperialist countries, particularly the USA, claim the right to impose in the Middle East.

An unstable and strangulatory "peace"

The ritual formula used to keep the masses happy is that this a "just and lasting peace"; the truth - clearly shown by the conditions of surrender imposed on Iraq - is that it is an **unstable and strangulatory** imperialist "peace". It is strangulatory because it aims at establishing **total subservance** by "**Balkanising**" the Arabic-Islamic world and triggering conflicts among the people of the area. It is unstable, not only because it goes against the **irrepressible** (but constantly denied) needs of the proletariat and the super-exploited masses to be "pacified", but also because the substantially limited and unequally distributed profits from the war have **aggravated** the contrasts between different and **conflicting** imperialist plans for carving up the Middle East (and the rest of the world). "Business Week" (march 11, 1991) has pointed out that "*a stable Mideast will be harder to achieve than military victory*"; and, we would add that the **inevitable** absence of such a stabilisation will give a decisive blow to the whole process of imperialist pacification in the world.

The foundation stone of the "imperial peace" was the *diktat* (naturally supported by the UN) laying down the truce conditions. Baghdad was not only obliged to recognise the existence of Kuwait as a legitimate State, but also had to accept that the borders drawn up by the colonialists in their own interests

were fair and definitive. This defeated and devastated country - which is to say, in the final analysis, **the mass of Iraqi workers** - is crushed under the weight of the cut of its petrol income which must be paid as "war damages" to the derelict al-Sabah family. The state of Iraq has been disarmed in order to prevent it from succumbing to any new "anti-imperialist" or anti-Israeli temptations; but it has been allowed to retain those arms which are considered necessary for the suppression of internal social uprisings - and, as we have seen, the full right to use them. The embargo against Iraq is maintained with a certain degree of flexibility, but as a means of permanent blackmail. International control troops (and you can rest assured that these will also include "our" boys) are setting up their positions on the borders - or rather, **inside** them. And, as in all self-respecting bourgeois transactions, there's the "special arrangement". Much of it has gone to the advantage of the three imperialist Chancelleries of the countries first in the war line (Washington, London and Paris); but neither Germany nor Italy has been completely forgotten. This time, it's the so-called "Kurdish security zone", situated in Iraq with its centre at Zakho; but, despite its name, this is nothing more than **an imperialist bridgehead in Iraqi and Kurdish territory**. Unlike Peshawar (which is located on the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan), this is physically inside enemy territory, and the Kurds can be "sure" of only one thing - that the imperialist governments, while keeping them under the strictest surveillance, will try to recruit them for the most thankless and underhand acts of sabotage against Iraq and, in the final instance, against their own cause.

The first piece in this mosaic of the "just and lasting" peace promised by the victors is, as "Business Week" has said, the reduction of Iraq to a **pariah State**. And this "pacification" reserves no happier fate for the oppressed Palestinian masses, who find themselves more than ever at the centre of **a concentric offensive from all sides**. While Israel, now safe even from the hypocritical "condemnation" of the "international community", continues to hammer the unextinguished Intifadah, Palestinian workers throughout Arabia are suffering mass expulsions at Arab hands (Sionism has come a long way!) and, in newly "liberated" Kuwait, the terror of savage torture and summary executions by the thousand. The Lebanese government, in aligning itself with converted Syria, has decreed the immediate disarming of the Palestinian militia (or else ..). The regime in Damascus has given the order to all of the Palestinian groups which are still wretchedly under its influence to re-enter the ranks of the PLO in order to strengthen the most reconciliatory line; and even Europe has placed the PLO itself in quarantine for having dared to support (albeit in an obvious state of necessity) their bestially attacked "Iraqi brothers".

No imperialist government any longer pays even lip service to the **self-determination** of the Palestinian people, or the existence of a **Palestinian State**. The benevolence of the "dove", Baker, only goes as far as **"something less"** than a Palestinian state: a single, large (in comparison with 1948)... **Israeli**

state within which, in time - and providing they show that they merit it - a certain degree of local "self-government" may be conceded to the Palestinians. As an alternative, or in combination, there could be a Jordanian-Palestinian confederation carefully structured in such a way that, given the scarcity of territory and economic potential - as well as (a hoped-for) disparity of treatment between the two or more components of the population - there will exist from the beginning the conditions for rekindling hostilities between Palestinians and Jordanians of Bedouin origin, thus inverting the trend towards brotherhood which has gradually reinforced itself over recent years.

The fundamental resolution of the imperialist powers remains that of crushing the Palestinian revolutionary struggle and, above all, of suffocating that Intifadah which has become the target of **every** "peace" initiative. The achievement of this objective will also involve a reduction in the obstacles to the growth of Palestinian industry and, more generally, the establishment of a Palestinian bourgeoisie in the "occupied territories" (where there are already reports of clandestine Israeli-Palestinian **joint ventures**), according to the classical method of oppression - **economic concessions** in exchange for **political capitulation**. This political capitulation (to which one part of Al Fatah has already expressed its inclination, and for which Faisal Husseini's declaration about the danger "from the left" is designed to pave the way) is supposed to consist of the **explicit and definitive renunciation** of the Palestinian movement to claims for its own **State**, and its definitive acceptance of **refugee** status. For its part, the usurping State of Israel would be recognised as sacred and untouchable (far beyond the conditions of any of the resolutions of the UN) by means of bilateral agreements with **all** of the Arab states who contested its birth. In its turn, through the re-establishment of diplomatic relations, the USSR would guarantee the continuity of the supply of the people who are indispensable for feeding Tel Aviv's territorial expansionism (an expansionism which, on the one hand, its Yankee protectors continue to finance and, on the other, claim to keep under control).

The place that the Kurdish question held for a few weeks in the eyes of so-called international public opinion may give the impression that, at least for the exploited Kurds (and albeit at the price of unheard of suffering), the imperialist victory in the Gulf War would have given a **chance** of "promotion". **But nothing could be further from the truth.** As we explain elsewhere, the "allies" (beginning with the Americans) have played another **cruel hoax** on the Kurdish masses. In reality, the Iraqi-Kurdish movement (the Kurd "card") has been simply **used** by the imperialist powers in their attempt to overthrow Saddam by popular pressure, given that they considered it too risky to do it directly with their own troops. But this proved to be more difficult than expected, while the Kurdish uprising (**against** the intentions of the West) threatened to spread and become a complication in the "pacification" of the region - particularly within the Turkish bastion. Consequently, Washington &

Co. decided to abandon the rebel populations to the reprisals of Baghdad. The terrible defeat suffered by the Iraqi-Kurdish masses who, with enormous ingenuousness (and to the immense blame of their leaders), expected to receive help from imperialism, exposes them more than ever before to the cynical calculations of the United States and Europe. As it is all too obvious to see, the idea is to try to recruit Iraqi-Kurdish contingents in permanent anti-Arab and pro-imperialist skirmishing actions, setting them (by means of their feofship to the government in Ankara) against the struggles of the working Kurdish masses in Turkey. In the meantime, as a foretaste of the pledge to future Kurdish "autonomy" (!), the imperialist military presence has been **extended** from the Turkish zone of Kurdistan - which is now full of NATO bases - to a first slice of Iraqi Kurdistan. A step forward, without a doubt: not for the self-determination and reunification of the oppressed Kurds, and even less, for their emancipation from exploitation - but for the mortal enemies of both processes.

Nor should the conclusion of the new agreement between Kurdish representatives and the Iraqi regime deceive us. It is the consequence of the greater weakness of **both** parties in the face of imperialist capital - and so it's very unlikely to lead to the actuation of the 1970 agreement on the autonomy of Iraqi Kurdistan. (By the way, did you know that the much vituperated Ba'athist Iraq is the only country to have recognised Kurdish autonomy - albeit only on paper? We offer this only for information; communists have no word to say in defence of Saddam's **bourgeois regime**). No, it is much more likely that the multiple international supervision invoked by Iraqi-Kurds (and claimed by the imperialist powers) will become the "legal" channel through which every kind of manoeuvre and intrigue will be conducted, aimed at using the resistance of the Kurdish people against oppression for the ends of imperialist schemes which are antagonistic to that resistance itself.

It's the truth: the establishment of the order so dear to the ultra-reactionary "Holy Alliance" (which "our" country is so eager to join) necessarily involves the **destruction** of the most rebellious of the oppressed countries and peoples, and the subjection to the iron rule of financial capital of all of the peoples in the area **without exception - particularly the workers and the proletariat**. The Gulf War cannot be explained only by the need that the imperialist countries had to give Iraq a lesson, but also by the growing difficulties of their traditional allies in the area, as well as the difficulties of all of the local bourgeoisies as a whole, to confront the anti-bourgeois and anti-imperialist social uprising.

The success of the imperialist counter-offensive of the combined new/old colonialisms against the exploited of the Middle East depends upon its ability **to divide the front of the exploited**, setting one group against another (and, at the same time, obstructing any decisive connection **with the metropolitan working classes and revolutionary communism**). Although (and because) the

bestial attack against the Iraqi people has tended to have the opposite effect, the main intent of the great imperialist powers remains that of obstructing by ... all necessary means, the unification of the front of the Arab-Muslim workers. How? By inciting the greatest competition possible among Arab countries for access to "aid" - by means of the partial writing-off of debts, "most-favoured" trade agreements, etc; by blowing on the embers of the reasons underlying the contrasts and wars between the countries of the Middle East (this "highly moral" but disguised interventionism gave rise to both the Iran-Iraq and the Iraq-Kuwait conflicts); by making use of the material sediments, culture and sentiments produced **in the masses** by their past histories, setting Kurds against Arabs, Sunnites against Shi'ites (and vice versa), Arabs against Iranians, Egyptians against Iraqis, Jordanian bedouins (and as many others as possible) against Palestinians, Israelis against Arabs, Iraqi Kurds against the other Kurds, Berbers against Arabic Algerians, Saudi Arabians against the Yemenis, Egyptians against the Sudanese, and so on ... , in order to be able to **oppress and squeeze all of them** more efficiently.

**There is no sign of a "Marshall Plan"
for the poorest countries in the Arab world**

The *pax impériale* will not bring anything but greater oppression, exploitation and new wars to the already exploited Arab-Islamic masses. There will not even be any advantage for the workers in the two Arab countries (Egypt and Syria) which stand to gain the greatest benefit from the "allied" victory. It is, of course, probable that the ostracism of workers from Palestine, the Yemen and other "pro-Saddam" countries on the part of the petrol monarchs will open up new employment opportunities for Egyptian and Syrian wage-earners - but nothing more. The prospect of a grand investment plan designed to promote the development of the poorest Arab countries will remain nothing more than a dead letter. The reason is simple: **there is a lack of capital to advance**. And, even more, there is a **lack of effective political will** in those who should encourage such a plan.

It is well known that the majority of American "aid" to Middle Eastern countries consists of **the sale of arms on credit**. It is easy to foresee that, in the context of the growing instability of capitalism (on a world level, and not just in the Middle East), this will absorb **more than ever before** the increasingly limited financial resources that the USA can dedicate to the region. But if it is unlikely that the Gnomes of Wall Street will embark on any programme to finance an even more hypothetical "Marshall Plan" designed to enable the most indebted countries of the Middle East to come out of the conditions of misery in which they live, the possibility that such a plan might be financed by Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the Emirates is also very slight.

The not-inconsiderable costs of the war, and those of post-war reconstruction, has knocked out Kuwait for a number of years to come; the Emirates represent nothing more than a complementary force for decisions whose key is elsewhere. Consequently, only Saudi Arabia is in a condition to act in terms of that "equal redistribution" of the wealth of the Arab world which some people dream about. But the war against Iraq was a left-hander for the kingdom of the al-Saud (and of the al-Sheikh): according to the "International Herald Tribune" (13 February),

*"Saudi Arabia's immense oil fortune has been depleted by the cost of the Gulf war, forcing the kingdom to seek **large loans for the first time** from international banks".*

Too much is beginning to be expected from even the enormous oil revenues of Saudi Arabia! It is expected to cover America's National Debt by buying Federal Treasury Bonds; to cover a large part of America's war expenses for the "security" of Arabia; to meet its own exploding "defence" costs; to prop up those Arab regimes which allied themselves to the imperialist aggression; and finally to advance money to those Middle Eastern countries which were most badly hit by the crisis (and there are not just a few of them!) in order to put a brake, if nothing more, on the economic recession they are going through. The 11 March edition of "Business Week" was being undoubtedly realistic when it said,

*"At best, aid to the poorer Arab states will be **highly selective**. Egypt and Syria will be rewarded for their help. But no one is willing to aid Jordan, Yemen, Sudan, or the Palestine Liberation Organization, which sided with Iraq. And that could inflame radicals. "Not only will the gulf war make the region as a whole much **poorer**, but the inequalities between the have and have-not states are likely to become **even more pronounced**," says Yahya M. Sadowski of the Brookings Institution."*

Squeezed between the opposing demands of imperialism and social revolution (neither of which has any respect for the decadent "guardians of the holy places" of Islam), Saudi Arabia will certainly be **incapable** of becoming the regional stronghold of an "allied peace" which could, in any sense, be considered "democratic". This because, even if it were to take on an "egalitarian" role beyond its borders, it would almost certainly find itself at odds with the growing internal bourgeois-democratic movement which is beginning to come out into the open and which is goaded (among other things) by the need to prevent popular dissatisfaction from coagulating in Islamic radical - or, even worse, "left" forms. And so, granting that **-as an extreme absurdity-** the Saudi

Kingdom accepts the role described above, this acceptance would likely lead to a multiplication of the factors relating to its own socio-political instability. In reality, the defeat and devastation of Iraq (precisely because of the weight of the unresolved problems it leaves for the victors) sounds the death knell of Saudi autocracy - no less than the "invasion" of Kuwait.

Here is the rub: the USA and its "allies" realise that, after having sown immeasurable hatred with their "Desert Massacre", they have no alternative but to make albeit limited **concessions** towards the expectations of the exploited Arab-Muslim masses, and particularly towards the Palestinians. But they have to ask these concessions to be made by the very regimes (protected or enslaved) which are the least willing to make them: **either** because, reinforced by the "allied" victory or the breaking up of the Arab world, their appetites have been whetted and they tend to increase their claims (look at Israel); **or** because, despite the destruction of Iraq, they don't feel **and are not** sufficiently in control at home or in the area to consider themselves safe from the effects that the granting of concessions might have on the expectations of the masses (as in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait). Furthermore, the Bush administration itself is interested in proceeding very cautiously in the face of the most thorny problems (the claims of the Palestinian masses, the Kurdish question, "aid" to the poorest Arab states, the "democratisation" of the feudal oil kingdoms) precisely because it is afraid of setting in motion an **uncontrollable process** which, instead of leading to pacification, will **re-ignite all of the contradictions** existing in the Middle East.

The truth is that the victory of the imperialist "Holy Alliance" is as fragile on a socio-political level as it was successful in military terms. It is for this reason that the **jigsaw puzzle** of "peace" in the Middle East is **so difficult to complete**. Of course, the process of imperialist "pacification" (of which America is the main protagonist) may well make some initial limited progress. But what is certain is that neither the imperialism of the USA, nor that of its partners/adversaries, is capable of creating any **real "just and lasting" solutions** for the oppressed or for the Arab-Muslim peoples. There are only **inconsistent and reactionary pseudo-solutions** which the revolutionary struggle of the exploited will inevitably lead to failure (it's not for nothing that the last of these "solutions" was the war of imperialist devastation against Iraq).

The imperialist victory sharpens the conflict among the "allied" plunderers

Another, and no less important, reason for the weakness of the process of imperialist "pacification" is the fact that the war in the Gulf has accentuated the largely pre-existing contrasts among the greatest of the imperialist powers. When Bush, high on the wave of "Desert Massacre", declared the advent of

a "new world order", coinciding with a "**second American century**", he even managed to upset the tail-wagging British puppies who, through the columns of "The Economist", suggested that the time had come **to share the leadership of imperialism** :

"The lesson of the Gulf war is not that the world is America's plaything, but that America needs to build alliances abroad in order to do desirable things in the world. By persuasion, not instruction, is how the superpower must lead".

After all, as it was perfidiously observed, "*in order to defeat a country with a GNP equivalent to that of Portugal*", the USA had to set up a coalition of 30 countries, use a good 75% of its tactical air force and 40% of its tanks ...

But if the British suggested that the Americans should not delude themselves, "triumphant" Washington was to receive much more menacing messages from Tokyo, Bonn and other European capitals, demonstrating that the struggle among the major imperialist powers is becoming more bitter **in every field**. Not only, and not so much, because of the competition surrounding the "dividends of peace", but rather because these dividends are less than might have been expected - and because the Gulf War has not been anything like enough to resolve the increasingly tangled contradictions of the world capitalist system.

The price of oil - **and this is an undeniable success of Saddam's gesture of insubordination** - cannot return to the pre-August 2 levels of a little over 10 dollars because, despite the fact that OPEC has been split into tiny fragments, neither Saudi Arabia nor Kuwait (the two saboteurs of every attempt on the part of oil producers to maintain their prices) is any longer interested in selling oil at zero cost - because this has now also become **impossible for them to bear**. And, more generally, after an uprising of the exploited masses which managed to express the revolutionary claim of cutting the imperialist states' energy supplies, the same goes for all of the Middle Eastern bourgeoisies.

Nor is any normalisation of the situation in the Middle East in sight. Despite reducing Iraq to a mass of rubble, the war in the Gulf has not smoothed out any problems, even for America. Increasingly pressurised by the loss of dynamism and competitiveness of its own economy and by the challenge represented by the competition of its "allies", the USA drew out the "big stick" recommended by Roosevelt and used it with no half-measures because they were also protecting their primacy in the West. But the results have been **contradictory**. They have saved some markets **for themselves**, recovered more or less monopolistic control of an important colony, and re-affirmed their functional leadership of the imperialist world. But, despite this, the area of the world's economy which is in recession (and which has America at its epicentre) is spreading; the super-power continues to find itself trapped in the spiral of its own indebtedness (and we know that debts mean **weakness**) and,

at the same time, alarms its "allies" by indulging in military expenses which they are expected to cover.

Diplomatic lies are increasingly unable to hide the fact that, **as a result of the profound and general crisis of capitalism**, the imperialist powers have **a number of areas of conflict**. There is open conflict at the level of interest rates: debtors are pushing for a reduction which the creditors don't want to know anything about. The USA is calling for an immediately expansionist policy; Germany (faced with the economic unknowns of unification) and Japan (worried by the collapse of its stock exchange and the crisis affecting its property market) have a different economic policy. The controversies over customs tariffs (the so-called "Uruguay Round") have not been resolved; nor those concerned with IMF contributions. Furthermore, there is disagreement about the structure and the regulations which should govern BERS, the multinational bank intended to assist investment in Eastern Europe. The agreement between Germany's Daimler-Benz and Japan's Mitsubishi for strengthening the air forces of the two countries, and the immediate American response of introducing the new Lockheed super-fighter, show that the inter-imperialist struggle has already spread to the most strategic of all industrial areas. In addition to the question of who should pay for the Gulf War, and who should reap the short-term profits, there is also conflict over the so-called "regional peace conference", or rather over the medium-long term profits: the Americans would like to exclude the Europeans, and the Europeans are themselves lacerated by historical antagonisms. The reasons for inter-imperialist disagreements continue to build up, and everywhere careful examination of future prospects gives rise to questions concerning "defence" policies. Is it only chance that Germany and Japan took advantage of the aggression against Iraq to send their troops abroad **for the first time since 1945**? And that Italy has decided to speed up the formation of a career army?

After having punished "war-mongering" Iraq, the imperialist Chancelleries promise a "just and lasting peace" and invite the workers to work hard to achieve it. Communist revolutionaries, on the other hand, see the "Desert Massacre" as **the beginning of a phase of a general intensification of oppression and exploitation, and the relaunching of capitalist militarism**, and call upon the proletariat to **fight** now - better and more strongly than in the case of the aggression against Iraq - against the democratic counter-revolution, the most insidious of all.

(from "Che Fare", No.21, May-June 1991)

A WAR WHICH WILL BE THE MOTHER OF GREAT REVOLUTIONARY UPHEAVALS

Iraq was badly defeated in the war. But, for oppressed countries and classes, it is always better to lose a fight than to give up without a struggle. And then, there's defeat and defeat. **This** defeat was not simply a repetition of the rout of 1948, nor of the catastrophic "Six Days' War" - when Israel, **by itself**, had little difficulty in routing the "anti-Sionist" coalition. It is true that, in the end, Iraq had to bow down in front of the imperialist diktat, but only at the cost of a war - **and what a war!**

The breadth of the alliance led by the USA, its fire power and the incredible disproportion between the forces of the two sides (the real consistency of the Iraq's armed forces was enormously less than that described in Western war propaganda) objectively **enhance** the resistance of Iraq and the significance of its challenge against the imperialist ranks. Since 1830, the year of the beginning of the French occupation of Algeria, the "most developed" capitalist countries of Europe and America have continued their attacks against the Arab world - first to reduce it to colonial status, and then to keep it there: and, in response, the Arab peoples have never tired of rising up in rebellion against the new slave-merchants. In this context, the latest war in the Gulf will be remembered because, **for the first time**, all of the capitalist imperialists had to combine -bringing together in Arabia the best-equipped army ever seen in history, assuring themselves the agreement of the most domesticated and reactionary Arab property-owning classes -in order to drive back not so much (or not only) Iraq, a country of 18 million inhabitants, but rather the threat of an overwhelming Arab-Muslim Intifadah. And while, despite its highly advanced system of protection, the territory of Israel was violated, the course of events changed the old colonial stereotype of "**frightened** Arabs", substituting it with the realisation that the Arabs - or, more particularly, the **exploited** Arabs - **are frightening**.

All of the clamour of the imperialist fanfare is ludicrous. In the same way as it doesn't redound to the glory of any of the Schwarzkopfs of this world, the defeat of Iraq doesn't bring any shame or dishonour to the peoples of the Middle East. It was in the "natural" order of things. And it is obvious that,

in any case, it **doesn't even remotely** represent the defeat of the struggle against imperialism **itself**; it is only **an episode** in the struggle, and an indication of the **inconsequential nature of the bourgeois way in which the struggle is being conducted**. Looked at for what it really was, and recognising that it has momentarily created a sense of delusion and depression in the masses who went out into the streets in support of Iraq's insubordination, the defeat represents an experience from which we can and must draw some important lessons for the future.

The first of these (and this is well known to revolutionary marxism), is that the oppressed countries can be successful in their war against imperialism **only if** the proletariat and the exploited masses accept that it is their **direct** responsibility (**socially, politically and militarily**), to **extend** it and **radicalise** it to its extreme "**internal**" and **international** consequences: in effect, only if their struggle becomes a part of the **world socialist revolution**.

Of course, Saddam's regime was interested in moving in the opposite direction. While proclaiming the need for a "Holy War" against imperialism on the part of the **entire** Arab-Muslim world, it was careful not to translate its declarations of "principle" into any consequent practical measures either inside or outside Iraq. The attitude of the Ba'athist regime towards the recruitment of volunteers is emblematic. At first, there were vehement appeals to "Arab brothers" and all of Islam to come in **armed** aid of the country and to overthrow the governments participating in the attack from the West. But when faced with the enormous response from the poor masses of the region (it seems that more than a million people volunteered in Algeria, and between one and two hundred thousand in tiny Jordan - to say nothing of the other countries involved), Baghdad went back on its tracks - and, in the end, decided to cooperate with those very governments that were supposed to be overthrown in restraining the anti-imperialist movement. Then there was the inevitable epilogue, midway between enigma and farce, when the first (and only) "international" pro-Iraq contingent, made up of 50 militants carefully selected by the Algerian FIS, was said to have embarked at Algiers, but never arrived in Baghdad ...

The fact that neither the process of unification nor the general arming of the Middle Eastern working masses was ever **effectively** brought about is due, among other things, to the policies of Saddam himself and of the bourgeois "anti-imperialists" in general, **who have always been hostile to the fact that it is the exploited who are the real protagonists in the fight against imperialism**. Of course, we are not saying that the enrolment of large numbers of volunteers (or even all of them) would have been enough to have changed the result of **this** battle. Nevertheless, the value of such a contingent, certainly modest at a short-term military level, would have been **enormous** at the socio-political level (and therefore also from the medium-term military point of view) - because it would have represented the **beginning** of a change of front, opening

up the possibility of freeing the anti-imperialist class struggle from bourgeois mortgages à la Saddam, a **first moment** in the concrete destruction of castrating national borders, and an **initial** assumption of responsibility on the part of the oppressed masses for all of the tasks associated with the war of liberation against imperialism (instead of just passively waiting for orders "from above"). It is more than obvious that such a development would be obstructed by the Iraqi regime.

In the Arab world, the gap between the exploited masses and the exploiting classes has become wider

The bourgeois regime of Baghdad is co-responsible for its defeat, and particularly for the **way** in which it came about - nor could it be otherwise. This co-responsibility appears even more obvious when we consider the **unprecedented** extension of the anti-imperialist uprising of the workers in the region, who found themselves reunited in their condemnation of the imperialist intervention, despite their sometimes widely different views concerning the State of Iraq and "the Cavalier of the Arab nation", Saddam.

We continue to stress the great **class significance** of this uprising against the **refusal** of the Arab bourgeoisie and the **incapacity** of petit-bourgeois nationalism to use the fighting potential (in its broadest sense) of the exploited masses themselves, as well as against the **chauvinist denigration** of the uprising as a (presumed) expression of "fanaticism" and a "barbarous" rejection of the "superior values" of democracy and international law. The seething of the people in the streets, the thousands upon thousands of episodes of solidarity with the people of Iraq - including the fact that many members of the select corps of the Saudi Air Force did not have the heart to bomb Iraq; the open sympathy of the disinherited of Iran and Asia towards the resistance of Iraq; the albeit only "ideal" support from the Muslim peoples of the USSR (among the least likely to sell out to the West) - all of this, beyond the not secondary **limitations** of the movement (particularly the acceptance, at least in part, of Saddam Hussein as a point of reference), expresses an instance which is precisely **and specifically that of the exploited classes: the need to fight against imperialist capital and to have the greatest possible unity in conducting the struggle.** This is an instance which, as chance would have it, has also been recently expressed in popular anti-American demonstrations in Mexico, which - as you will agree - is not exactly in the cradle of Islam ...

To anybody who has completely forgotten both the structure of imperialism and the characteristics of the class struggle in countries dominated by imperialism, this uprising may appear **backward** in comparison with the "purer" revolts in the Maghreb between 1984 and 1988. But this is not the case. For the proletariat and the poor masses of the oppressed countries, the struggles

against national or internationally dominant bourgeoisies **are not alternatives, but two sides of the same coin**. It can well be said that more immediate and "domestic" revolts prepared the way for this more general and "outward-looking" uprising which has, in its turn, laid the basis for broadening and radicalising the class struggle throughout the Arab-Muslim world, and **also in the metropoli. The war in the Gulf has deepened the divide between imperialism and the vast numbers of people who are superexploited by imperialism, as much as that between the exploiting classes and the Arab working masses.**

By becoming accomplices in the devastation of Iraq, or by remaining "neutral", the Arab bourgeoisie have lost a good part of their residual "anti-imperialist" credibility. It cannot be said that the Arab bourgeoisie has gone through any shining revolutionary experiences. Having arrived "late" on the world market scene, and consequently having to face an already consolidated imperialist capitalism, it could have conquered a less cramped space for the "Arab nation" **only by completing its unification** (a single market, a single pan-Arab **unified** state) and by really assuring itself, **in concrete terms**, the control of its enormous natural resources by taking them out of the hands of imperialism. But it has proved itself **impotent** in achieving this crucial historical task and even incapable of getting rid of the monarchies, emirates and sheikdoms which remain the ideal pawns in the imperialist game of subjugation and the Balkanisation of the Middle East. It was halted by its fear (**reactionary** even in terms of a fully completed bourgeois revolution, and even more so in comparison with communism) of setting the working masses in motion and stimulating a **social struggle pregnant with unwanted side-effects**, such as - to begin with the least of them - the general dismantling of pre-bourgeois institutions, genuine agrarian reforms, real guarantees of the rights of the proletariat and the masses to organise themselves, etc.

Although failing to reach the objective of even a partial pan-Arab unification - the only experience worth noting being that of the UAR (the United Arab Republic, which brought together Egypt, Syria and Yemen) was aborted at a very early stage - the Arab bourgeoisie has continued to keep the question on the boil (gently simmering ...). And to bring it out into the open every so often; sometimes to satisfy (verbally) popular expectations, sometimes to try to loosen the grip of Western imperialism - but always putting forward the unresolved Palestinian question as the main reason for unity and the symbol of redemption for **all** Arab peoples. The Camp David agreement dealt the first blow to this situation: an important part of the Arab bourgeoisie withdrew its solidarity with the Palestinian cause and, separating themselves from the "Arab nation", established peace with the usurping state of Israel. The Gulf War has inflicted a **definitive** blow against them: firstly, because this was **the first war between Arab states** but, above all, because to be isolated from the consensus of Arab governments is not a state in connivance with Israel and

imperialism (as was the case, at least formally, with Sadat's Egypt), but an Arab state which - also in the name of the liberation of Palestine (however genuine this declaration was) - dared to challenge, even if obliged to do so, both Israel and imperialism.

The crisis of world capitalism is beginning to destroy (both in the metropoli and in the "periphery") all of the hypotheses of a "third way" between capitalism and socialism one after the other. Together with the vague and illusory prospects offered by a "non-aligned Third World", the idea that the Arab bourgeoisie might be capable of uniting the Arab world is also beginning to fade. Incapable of constructing a genuine "anti-imperialist" bloc, and at the "head" of "national" economies which are exclusively geared to the needs of the imperialist "centre", the Arab bourgeoisies are **increasingly divided**. Each of them is only interested in itself (or rather in the financial capital controlling it), **in competition with the others** - and all of them are increasingly exposed to the blackmail of the dominating bourgeoisies. And to think that, here in Italy, there are still people of the "extreme left" who are convinced that the "Arab solution" (deriving from the existing "concrete" bourgeois and semi-feudal Arab regimes) would have been capable of providing a realistic "progressive" alternative to the outbreak of war ...

By sharpening the divisions among the Arab bourgeoisie, the war in the Gulf has also broadened the gap dividing the Arab bourgeoisie and the exploited masses. This is a result that can be found **everywhere**, precisely because of the reluctance of the bourgeoisies not directly involved in the war to go beyond diplomatic deplorations and the occasional superficial "anti-imperialist" gesture. We can make a rapid review, beginning with those countries who put themselves on the side of America.

Officially, Egypt is one of the winners; but the Egyptian workers, despite having **extremely well-founded** reasons for being opposed to the exploiting Iraqi classes and their regime, do **not** consider the destruction of Iraq and the re-establishment of al-Sabah as a victory for themselves. There are no signs of pro-Bush (or even pro-Mubarak) demonstrations in Egypt - and the government has not even tried to organise them. On the contrary, the only street demonstrations have been **in support of Iraq**, and even the over-patient City of Cairo ensured the rapid dissolution of the first post-massacre meeting of the Arab League in protest against "the traitors of the Arab cause". In Syria, only a bloody preventive repression stopped the masses from clearly expressing their anti-imperialist feelings. In Morocco, which supported the imperialists with a "symbolic" military contingent, the iron fist used by Hassan II against the social revolt of December had the effect of feeding a widespread mobilisation against imperialist aggression which included a demand for the withdrawal of Moroccan troops - a withdrawal which, despite his honeyed words concerning the "brothers" of Iraq, Hassan was **unable** to bring about. Turkey, the real local lynchpin of both the old and the new imperialist order in the region,

has been shaken from North to South by the largest wave of worker strikes and anti-Government demonstrations for ten years - which have merged internal and "external" struggles. In "liberated" Kuwait itself, not only has there been the total absence of any sign of "popular" jubilation or increased solidarity with the Court, but even the extremely domesticated "nationalist" and Muslim "opposition" has (for the very first time) gone into the streets to condemn the strengthening of the "police state" ordered by the Court and their occupying "allies". In the meantime, an Italian reporter has noted signs of *"growing rancour against the West"* among the poor population of Rhyad and has seen for herself how even the wealthy Saudi bourgeoisie are **ashamed** of the decisions taken by the autocracy ("Corriere della Sera", 18 February).

In those Arab countries which remained "neutral", the situation is more complex. There, **sometimes** (in Tunis and Tripoli), it was the governments or the parties in power who promoted initiatives against the war - only to prohibit any demonstrations on the first possible pretext and, once the war was over, make distensive gestures towards Egypt (but the Arabs in the street attacked the *ex-enfant terrible*, Ghedaffi, as a Pontius Pilate - and this, too, is something that had never happened before). In other cases, the bourgeois regimes limited themselves to following **up to a certain point** anti-imperialist demonstrations which, in truth, did not require any exciting additions. However, even in those places where this "game" was pushed a little further (as in Jordan and Algeria), the acrobatic Hussein, disguised as an ex-King, could not do anything but **oppose** the popular call to enter the war on the side of Baghdad, and the rediscovered "anti-colonialist" vein of the Algerian FLN **refused to tolerate** the setting up of the volunteer training camps called for by some Muslims. Even the leadership of the PLO, so prodigal in pro-Iraq declarations in syntony with the feelings of the Palestinian masses, did not translate its words into anything really practical - contrary to the expectations of the masses, and the requests of the Infitadah's united Command.

Ben Bella has pointed out that,

*"In all of the Arab **armies** there was a **profound malaise** at the fact that their governments do not speak out clearly. They are already morally at war with the countries fighting Iraq"* ("Corriere della Sera", 13 February).

Exactly. **Not having declared themselves clearly** might have increased the rating of one or two regimes at the expense of "opposition" movements which were even more embarrassed and ambiguous (this is the case in Algeria), but only at the price of **profoundly** increasing the sense of malaise of the exploited masses (including those under arms!) on account of the fact that no **armed** support was offered to the Iraqi people brutally raped by the West.

However capable the Arab bourgeoisies were at controlling and containing

the mass movement in those places where it threatened to break free, the anti-imperialist wave which crossed the Middle East has **globally weakened** their hold on their working masses and revitalised the push towards the independence of the proletarian movement. If, in the eyes of the oppressed masses, the regimes who called for the attack against Iraq (Saudi Arabia and Kuwait) have for ever condemned themselves to the black list of servants of imperialism; if the regimes who actively cooperated in the attack (Egypt and Syria) are destined to lose whatever residual prestige they may have had - in the case of Egypt, already almost non-existent - as standard bearers of the Arab cause; we can be sure that even those regimes who managed to remain "neutral" will not for long be able to repeat their acrobatic exercise of declaring themselves "anti-imperialist" without doing anything effectively to demonstrate it. They will find themselves stopped by the very plans of the imperialists themselves for the "pacification" of the Arab-Muslim world; the devastation of Iraq was just the beginning.

Signs of difficulty for Islamic populism, signs of release for the proletarian movement

The Islamic movement itself, which has "unexpectedly" come out of the war with a number of bruises, has experienced something of the kind. The definitive burning of pan-Arab nationalism (even the Ba'athists in Iraq have now opened discussions about consigning it to the archives) provided the Muslim organisations with an albeit abstract opportunity of **fully** affirming the (interclassist) unity of **Islam as a whole** as the only "winning" (**bourgeois**) prospective for the struggle against imperialism. This opportunity has been substantially missed - above all by post-Khomeini Iran which, in abstract terms, should have been the hub of such a movement, but which has preferred to play a **fireman's** role. The reason underlying this "failure" is that, as elsewhere, the Middle East is seeing the end of the cycle of an "anti-imperialist" revolution capable of keeping together in a single national bloc **all** of the classes of its people. A new cycle is beginning, marked by the **inexorable deepening of the divisions** separating the exploiting from the exploited classes in (**and because of**) the "anti-imperialist" movement. In "Che Fare" No. 15, we pointed out how this process is reflected in the growing political polarisation of the Islamic movement; the war in the Gulf represents another step in this direction, obliging both of the tendencies of Islamism to show their (marked) cards a little more.

Rafsanjani's Iran did not, of course, repress the demonstrations against the West: it had no interest in doing so. However, committed as it is to "coming out of the shadow of Khomeini" (or rather **of the 1979 insurrection**) and to accelerating its reconstruction in "post-revolutionary" terms, it did whatever it

could to **hold back** the radicalisation and unification of the oppressed Muslim masses both inside and outside its borders. The "pragmatic" wing of the regime tried not to alienate its poorest social base which had instinctively (a good instinct!) set itself against the "allies" but, albeit with caution, it **had to** declare itself in favour of the end of the "exportation of the revolution" and, under various pretexts, **against** the "anti-imperialist *Jihad*". The populist wing dusted off its old insignia of the struggle "against imperialism" (the "Kayan International" even went as far as to foresee the formation of an international contingent for the defence of Iraq which, in addition to Muslim countries, would also include Cuba, North Korea and Vietnam) but - how much ground reformism has covered! - without acting consistently in this direction; unless making empty speeches in Parliament or writing rhetorical articles in the press can be considered as action. The celebrations of the 12th anniversary of the overthrow of the Shah highlighted the fact that neither of these two tendencies **really** reflected the expectations of the more militant elements of the "Muslim" masses who called for concrete and effective action against the "Great Satan" of America and the "Small Satan", Israel. An episode which occurred at the base of Khorramshar - where a military unit aimed its missile batteries against Saudi Arabia and the ships of its "allies" - offers a small insight into the same phenomenon: the authorities immediately disarmed and transferred the "guilty" who, however (and this is as much as the "radicals" were able to obtain), were not punished. An even more embarrassing confirmation was suffered by both the regime and its Muslim "opposition" when the people of Iran remained indifferent to their declarations of support for the Iraqi Shi'ites who had risen against Saddam (trusting, at least in part, the imperialist aggressors who continue to receive the concentrated class hatred of the *mostazafin*).

The experience of the Algerian FIS was no easier; having just arrived to the limelight, they were immediately forced to try to **reconcile the irreconcilable** (the claims of antagonist classes); the conditioning of their pro-Saudi origins and the violent pressure "from below" pushing in exactly the opposite direction, the proposals for transforming Algeria into a single large "anti-imperialist" military training camp and cutting oil and gas supplies to imperialist countries (including the "brave" Europeans) and the complete absence of any concrete action. Things did not go any better even for those Jordanian Muslims who, with the finish of the war, are now called upon to render account of their **inconclusiveness** - given that both Jordan (as a state) and its "hyper-revolutionary" Parliament stood looking out of the window while Iraq was cut to ribbons. But beyond such individual cases, there is a global fact: the anti-imperialist uprising provoked by the Gulf War **has introduced numerous elements of contradiction and attrition between the Muslim leadership and the disinherited masses**, leading to an overall **increase** in the distance separating one from the other. For people like us, who see the exploited masses enrolled by the Muslim organisations as **revolutionary potential** which can and must

be liberated by communists and the proletariat, this is a promising development (and the nth confirmation that the struggle against imperialist domination **necessarily divides** the "anti-imperialist" classes).

In parallel, the **first steps** in the process of freeing Middle Eastern workers and the proletariat from the prospectives (and structures) of bourgeois nationalism can also be seen. We have previously spoken about Iran and the Palestinian Intifadah. Now, the increased political role of the exploited and the **tendential** differentiation of their from the other "national" (interclassist) organisations begins to be visible throughout the entire region. Two factors deserve attention (also for the future): 1) the weight of trade union organisations in **broadening the mobilisation**; 2) the emergence of an **embryonal** break between the Arab trade union movement (in transformation) and the Arab governments to which it has been traditionally tied, insofar as it is now gathering new energies from the "grass roots" and taking on greater **political** responsibilities.

It is unnecessary to point out how the return in grand style of workers' strikes in Turkey (miners, engineering and textile workers) had a positive spin-off on mass protests against imperialist intervention and the part that Turkey was and is playing. Perhaps even more determinant is the role being played by the trade union movement in Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia in driving and broadening the struggle.

Particularly significant was the stand taken by the Confederation of Turkish Workers in Europe (ATiK) which, in a leaflet distributed in Germany, recognised the war in Iraq as a war *"against all of the peoples in the region"* and called on *"the people of the Middle East who find themselves in the midst of the war"* to **"transform the imperialist war into civil war"**. Nor did it stop there:

"Even in regions far from the war zone, it added - and this is a fundamental addition - there are many tasks to be done. Above all, European public opinion must oppose imperialist action and do everything possible against this war. German and foreign workers should erect barricades against this imperialist war and set a good example of international solidarity. This is more necessary than ever for civilised humanity!"

Although it lacks decisiveness in terms of a projection towards the proletariat of the West, the position of an Algerian Communist organization is also worthy of note. This is well capable of distinguishing, from within the Arab world, between *"solidarity with the people of Iraq"* and the need *"not to develop any illusions about the (bourgeois) nature of the Iraqi regime"*. It incites the Arab masses to have *"no pity on Arab regimes"*, the majority of which are aligned with *"the positions of imperialism"*, representing *"greedy, indebted and imperialism-dependent bourgeoisies"*; it rightly ties the strengthening of the anti-

imperialist mobilisation to the condition the "*movement doesn't (remain) drawn by Saddam Hussein*"; and finally, it very clearly formulates the step forward that the exploited of the Middle East are called upon to make

*"The masses of the Arab world **must stop** putting their destinies in the hands of a **zaim**: Nasser yesterday and Saddam Hussein today. There is no individual hero, only the people, providing they have faith in their own strength (...). **Only the popular masses, with the working class at their head, should carry out the struggle against imperialism, Sionism and the Arab bourgeoisie**".*

We know very well that these are **advanced elements** in the struggle and that, at the same time, the absence of a firm anchorage in communist doctrine inhibits them from **consistently** performing the task of revolutionary vanguards. Nor do we underestimate the **limitations** of an anti-imperialist uprising which continues to take (albeit with a less delegatory attitude) Saddam Husseins or "Muslim" bourgeois leaders as their points of reference, and accepts the Arab governments who remained "neutral" during the Gulf War as their interlocutors. We **categorically** exclude that these limitations can be fully overcome locally and only by means of the pressure of the masses.

In conclusion

The sense and content of our position is very different.

First: the holding back of the Arab bourgeoisies and the bourgeois Islamic movement itself from the tasks involved in the struggle against exploitation and imperialist subjection (which is, in any case, highly contradictory, given that **there is no way** of disappearing the reasons for the conflict against imperialism) does not remove the necessity for anti-imperialist struggle on the part of the proletariat and the exploited masses of the Arab-Muslim world. In fact, it is **just the opposite**: it **strengthens** it, given that imperialism can do nothing other than to reproduce, at new levels, all of the elements of national and "colonial" oppression (look at the war in the Gulf and the "peace" which the West would like to follow it) and that the Arab-Muslim bourgeoisies are jointly interested in this oppression more materially than ever.

Second: given the present stage of growth of world capitalism as a whole and the drawing of the international capitalist system towards the most catastrophic passages of its crisis, the growing inconsequential nature of bourgeois "anti-imperialism" has the effect of **objectively** bringing closer than ever before the tie between the anti-imperialist liberation struggle and the anti-bourgeois social struggle, between each "individual" national revolutionary

movement and the world communist revolution, between the great revolutionary upheavals maturing in the Middle East and the return of workers' struggles and the rebirth of the communist proletarian movement in Europe.

Third: from a careful reading of the events which have recently (and less recently) taken place in the Arab-Muslim world, it is possible to gather the **first signs** that the proletariat in the region (while remaining structurally and ... overstructurally weak) is taking some steps forward toward its own political independence. It is doing this **from within** an anti-imperialist movement which, for international more than local reasons, is still directed by non-proletarian classes; nor could it be otherwise, given the absence of an international Communist Party and the lack of proletarian dictatorship in the more developed countries. (However, **already today**, the banner of Arab-Muslim unity being waved by the exploited masses in movement is a very different thing from that of the past - and conflicts with that of bourgeois pan-Arabism or pan-Islamism).

Fourth: the complete and definitive liberation of the proletariat and oppressed peoples of the Middle East can take place only by means of the total and definitive overthrow of the capitalist social order and the imperialist system. This is the **final objective** which governs the way communists act **in** and **towards** the Middle East. But in order to ensure that this reference to international socialism, to the international unity of the proletariat and the exploited, to the reconstitution of the Communist Party does not remain privy of content, in order to be able to **really** help our Arab-Muslim class brothers to shed themselves of any illusions concerning Saddam Hussein, it is absolutely necessary to **understand** (yes, understand) the **real** situation in the Middle East and in the dominated countries as a whole; to reason over real facts and processes (without inventing, as it were, a Middle East which has been made "ultra-bourgeois and ultra-capitalistic" - something which doesn't exist in heaven or earth ... or in the Middle East); to make a complete analysis of the contradictions. It is only upon this basis that it will be possible to draw up guidelines for action (ours have already been reported in previous numbers of "Che Fare", and it seems useless to repeat them) which **really** serve to bring together (and tomorrow merge) the two sections of our class army in order to ensure that it can finally defeat those of the imperialists and the bourgeoisie. Is there really any need to remind those of our critics, who mistake us for "standers-by" or "underestimators" of the question or of the duties of the Party, that this, if nothing else, is necessary "Party work"?

(from "Che Fare", No.21, May-June 1991)

THE LATEST AND BITTEREST ACT IN THE AGE-OLD DRAMA OF THE KURDS

What a cruel hoax played on the Kurdish people! While the Kurds fall victim once again to a brigandish imperial peace, the Western Chancellories "deplore" the reprisals of the Iraqi government for which they are co-responsible, and the new-born PDS - obscenity added to obscenity - expresses its regret for the limitations imposed by Bush's realpolitik on that intrepid avenger of the oppressed who goes by the name of Schwarzkopf ...

It was all too easy for us to predict, as we wrote in "Che Fare" No.19, that it would have been (at the very least) a **disaster** for the Kurds to keep themselves aloof from the growing anti-imperialist mobilisation in the Middle East - under the illusion that they would be able

"to settle their scores with the bourgeoisies (not just one!) oppressing the Kurdish people", without "also, and above all, fighting to the end against imperialism"; or (even worse) "in the hope - so frequently demonstrated vain and suicidal in the past - that the services they rendered to the West might enable them to obtain their so much longed-for self-determination".

Ours must have seemed - we have no doubt - an over-exacting and ultimatum-like demand to make of a people who, after all, were (and still are) "only" asking for the recognition of a bourgeois right which the existing international order attributes **in abstract terms** to all nationalities. In brief, the typical "ideological" revolutionary pretext for bringing the resolution of all situations of oppression back to the question of the struggle against the imperialist/capitalist system as a whole. And yet, the tragic events in Iraqi Kurdistan go to show that the Marxist interpretation is the only **truly realistic** one for analysing the local and international conditions necessary for the liberation of the Kurdish people.

In the American trap

Unfortunately, having to pay the price of so-called peace agreements is nothing new to the oppressed masses of Kurdistan. In the long chamber of horrors of revered international law, the UN resolution of 3 April is just the latest ¹ to open up a period of mourning and diaspora for the exploited Kurds. It's something they have been through before; but this time it is more bitter than ever because the circumstances and the way it came about give it the connotations of an **unprecedented politico-military defeat**; a defeat mainly due to the **total improvisation, lack of preparation, and frightening confusion of political perspectives** which characterised the insurrection.

In order to justify the rout for which they are to blame, the irresponsible (to say little) "national" leadership accuses the spontaneous nature of the insurrection itself. But the truth is a bit different.

The imperialist attack against Iraq placed the Kurdish working masses in a **highly contradictory** position. The more conscious of them understood at once that the army of the Pentagon, its partners and native troops had landed in Arabia to launch an attack aimed at deterring **all** of the peoples of the Middle

¹ In 1923, it was the Lausanne peace treaty which cancelled from the geo-political face of the region the Kurdish mini-state foreseen by the treaty of Sèvres in 1920. *"Even the 'independent Kurdistan' foreseen by this treaty,"* wrote Kendal (Nizan), *"would, in any case, have been a country amputated of two-thirds of its territory - not to mention Persian Kurdistan - as well as of its fertile lands and its traditional stock-raising areas,"* so that, *"even if the treaty had been applied, the Kurdish country would have found itself divided into five parts by France in the west, Syria in the south, Persia in the east, Armenia in the North and independent Kurdistan in the centre"*. But the iniquity of Sèvres was substituted by one which was even worse: the territory of Kurdistan was divided into four and the independent state of Kurdistan was cancelled altogether (**the Treaty of Lausanne** - it must be remembered - **was also signed by Italy**). But other famous "peace agreements" have been no happier for the Kurdish people. In 1946, it was the spirit of Yalta (and the promise of oil concessions) which led Stalin's USSR to abandon the Kurdish Democratic Republic of Mahabad in Iranian Kurdistan to its fate. In Baghdad, nine years later, Turkey, Iran and Hashemite Iraq established, with a Pact wanted by Great Britain, the practice of collaborating in crushing the Kurdish national movement; a practice which, now widened to include Syria, still exists today - despite any other disagreements the four might have. Furthermore, the Algiers agreement, signed in 1975 by the Shah's Iran and Ba'athist Iraq under the exalted patronage of Kissinger, led to the liquidation of the guerillas headed by Mustapha Barzani; while the preparations for the 1988 cease fire between Khomeini's Iran and Saddam's Iraq led to the atrocious massacre of Halabja and the almost total recovery of Teheran's control over Iranian Kurdistan. On the battle standards of the Kurds could well be written: **peace be damned!**

East, and certainly not just to punish the regime of Saddam Hussein for his crimes against oppressed national minorities and workers. The proletarian Kurds of Diyarbakir and other cities in Turkish Kurdistan (Bingol, Batman, Idil, Sirnak, etc.), in unison with the Turkish miners and millions of oppressed Arab-Muslims, shouted it out loud in their demonstrations. It was this conviction which led to the more advanced sectors of the Kurdish movement, in Europe, the Middle East and **even in Iraq** itself, to feel solidarity in some way with the Iraqi masses martyred by "allied" bombardments. And that's why, despite the incessant incitements of Washington, Ankara, Damascus and the feudal Courts, the Iraqi Kurds were not disposed to rise up either before or during operation "Desert Massacre". The equivocal Jalal Talabani himself continued to profess neutrality, declaring that **both** Bush and Saddam were to be considered as "enemies of the world's peoples" and that the Kurds would fight only, and exclusively, for themselves.

On the other hand, the imperialist aggression against the Iraqi **people** could certainly not cancel the more than justifiable hatred of the exploited Kurds for the oppressing **regime** of Baghdad. In fact, the defeat of the regime had the effect of rekindling their hopes of being able to put an end to their relationship with it. However, it cannot be said that the uprising in Iraqi Kurdistan was **automatically** triggered by the "liberation" of Kuwait (have you heard of any signs of Kurdish jubilation for the return of the Lassie of imperialism?); nor that the PDK and PUK were simply dragged along behind. Rather, it was the reverse. It was the "opposition" to the Ba'athist regime (a vague conglomeration of forces which, as a block, have no better political credentials in the eyes of the workers than those of the "little Satan" ...) who blew as hard as they could on the discontent of the masses until it burst into flame. And they did this - and this is the **decisive point** of the question - on the basis of their **senseless belief** (assuming it was genuine) in an imperialist intervention on the side of the Kurds. This optimism, the incitement of their leaders and the mobilisation of the **Peshmerga** (who came down from the mountains for the first time in a long time) acted as the **detonator** for the general uprising of the Kurds. The impetus overwhelmed any residual calculation or tactical cunning which the leadership might have had and, one after the other, the urban centres rose up despite the fact that they (especially the working masses) did not have **even a minimum** idea of political direction or objectives (a sort of autonomy? self-determination? the fall of Saddam or negotiations with Saddam? objective convergence or agreement with the imperialists? cooperation with the Turkish government or the Turkish Kurds? etc.), nor **even the minimum** preparation or the necessary organisation for fighting the Iraqi army.

Despite the support of a certain number of "regular" officers and soldiers, an uprising under these conditions meant placing the fate of the insurrection

in the hands of the Yankees. The spokesman of the Kurds in the USA, Salih, had no hesitation in admitting that

"the Kurds would not have rebelled if they hadn't received promises from the Americans" ("l'Unità", 8 April - the newspaper of the PDS, the ex-PCI).

Equally explicit was the leader of the PDK, Masud Barzani:

"We simply responded positively to Bush's appeal. Our people rose up against Saddam Hussein with the aim of overthrowing the government of Baghdad; just as the United States requested" ("Il Manifesto", 10 April - a left newspaper).

But the US had absolutely no interest in encouraging the victory of a popular rebellion against Saddam. Nothing is further from the intentions of the imperialists in the Middle East (or in any other dominated country) than to see the birth **by means of an uprising** of even the smallest "popular democratic" entity - as the exploited Palestinians and Central Americans know all too well. Bush and Co. were looking for a very different and **opposite** result. According to their plans, the combination of the devastating "allied" bombardment of Iraqi Kurdistan (which nobody now seems to remember) and attractive appeals "to rebel against the tyrant" - together with a parallel action directed towards the Shi'ites in the region of Basra - would certainly have created a popular uprising; but with the **sole** and **precise** objective (**stabilising from a pro-imperialist point of view**) of dealing Saddam the final blow **from within** and causing his fall by means of a **military coup**. This (and certainly not the success of a mass insurrection) was the **only** real way to establish a post-war "peace" in Iraq and the surrounding area that was consonant with the interests of the imperialist states.

Having failed in their objective, and seen that there was a real risk of an extension of the revolt of the Kurds in the north and Muslim influence in the south, the "allied" governments did not hesitate to give the green light to the Republican Guard. At that point, it was in the **common** interests of both the imperialist victors and the vanquished bourgeois government to suffocate the uprising in blood. For the imperialists there was something further to be gained because, once again, it would be the Baghdad government to tan the hides of the unfortunate Kurds; for its part, the multinational Corporation which has the most to gain from tanning workers' hides (alias the imperialist West) could simply put all of the blame on its ex-protected and celebrate in counterpoint its own immeasurable humanity ...

An absolutely inescapable historical balance

If the uprising of the Kurdish population in Iraq was to lead them directly into the trap laid by Washington, and if the "proud Kurds" have given an image of themselves which closely resembles that of a horde of confused soldiers without any sense of direction, much of this is due to their incompetent and corrupt feudal-bourgeois leaders who still maintains their control over the national movement. They are to blame not only for the adventurist irresponsibility with which they sent their people to defeat (it hardly matters whether they were aware of being used or not), but also for the attitude adopted after the "betrayal" of the imperialist governments. The "unexpected" failure of "father Bush" (the epithet with which - ahum - one of the Kurdish fugitives described his principal enemy!) to fulfill their expectations led them, despite their high-sounding claims of a few days before, to give the order for a mass flight - without making even a **minimum attempt** to set up any kind of defensive barricade against an Iraqi army which was highly demoralised and disorganised as a result of desertions.

Imperialist propaganda explains that the disorder and panic shown by the mass of refugees was due to the pitiless repression of Saddam Hussein's regime. In our view - patience, if we have to say something unpopular - it was also, if not mainly, due to the **desertion on the field of battle** of the Iraqi Kurdish "High Command", bankrupt at both the political and military levels. It is equally probable - the news which we have is not certain - that the exodus was organised (or at least encouraged) by the PDK and PUK in order to strangle at birth that embryo of a "popular army" and "popular administration" directly appointed by the insurgent exploited masses in Sulaimanyia and, possibly, in other cities. It is nothing new to discover that the PDK and PUK are prepared to do everything in their power (inside and outside Iraqi Kurdistan) to block any move towards class autonomy on the part of the young proletariat or other exploited classes.

The sudden collapse of the revolt can also be explained as a result of its almost complete **isolation** from the non-Iraqi areas of Kurdistan. This is an old story: the Kurdish national-revolutionary movement has **never** been capable of even **beginning** to establish any kind of unity that goes beyond the artificial national boundaries imposed by imperialism. It is prevented by some material factors: first of all, the countries interested in perpetuating the oppression of the Kurds have consciously discouraged the establishment of any market which might lead to unification on a large scale; secondly, the permanence and inertia of centuries of pre-capitalistic social relationships still bear a great weight. These are factors which make it difficult **really** to unite the Kurdish masses. However, it is the fault of the Kurdish bourgeoisie as a whole that it has **never** been able (or **willing**) to put the question of the unity of the Kurdish resistance movement in Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria seriously on the table -

for fear of the **social** and **international** effects that a "simple" struggle for self-determination of this extent would have.

And so, among the (semi-) bourgeois Kurdish "parties", there has developed a **horrendous tradition** of "propping themselves up" against the **bourgeois** or even **imperialist** government rivals directly oppressing them - even at the cost of stabbing their "brother" movements in the back. The PDK and PUK have been denounced more than once for their collaboration with the regimes of the Shah and Khomeini in repressing Kurdish uprisings in Iran, and with the "enemy" Ba'athist regime in crushing what were considered to be socially dangerous political organisations, such as the Iraqi Communist Party ². In keeping with their tradition, these feudal-bourgeois Iraqi Kurd parties have established a "particular" relationship over the last few months - think about it for a moment - precisely with the Turkey of Ozal which (Middle Eastern NATO bastion as it is) acted as an **operational** support base for the imperialist aggression against Iraq, and against **all** of the oppressed people in the area - **including**, therefore, **the Kurds**. In the days when the Turkish army was bloodily repressing demonstrations against the Iraq war and against the presence of imperialist troops in Turkey (beginning with the demonstrations in Turkish Kurdistan), Barzani's right-hand man, Dyiazee, pronounced what can only be called a eulogy of the Turkish government:

*"It's position has changed for the better," he guaranteed, "as a result of the open policy of Ozal and the international situation. We consider that the Kurdish question is at a **turning point** (!). The Turkish authorities have understood that our objective is **not** to establish a separatist state in Iraq, but to obtain the recognition of our rights. In our opinion, the Kurdish question is **not** the same in Turkey as in Iraq (in the sense that in Turkey, where the thesis that the Kurds **don't exist** is still the official position, things are better than in Iraq ... Ed.). This means that it is up to each individual country to solve its problems in the light of its internal situation. As far as we Kurds are concerned, Turkey is not Iraq - and we have clearly said this to Ankara" ("La Repubblica", 15 March).*

A betrayal which, it is clear, unfailingly will rebound on the Iraqi Kurds themselves. The **unnatural** system of alliances which the PDK and PUK have established with the forces exploiting and oppressing the Kurdish masses **as much as the regime of Saddam Hussein** (without being able to ensure any

² A complete picture of Kurdish political formations is given in **Les Kurdes aujourd'hui** by Ch. More (L'Harmattan, 1984).

kind of "support" for the Kurdish uprising in Iraq) has significantly isolated and, to a certain extent, **compromised** them in the eyes of the exploited masses of the Middle East.

In the face of this nth tragedy, the vanguard of Kurdish workers **in Iraq and elsewhere** cannot limit itself to simply execrating the abominable violence of Baghdad's Republican Guard; it **must** - it's more than time! - draw up a serious balance of decades of heroic battles and **definitively** settle its accounts with the old feudal-bourgeois leadership which is by now only capable of provoking bitter defeats. The terms in which this balance must be drawn up clearly emerge from what is more or less a century-old experience. In brief, these are:

1) the oppression, exploitation and division of the Kurdish people is historically the work of **imperialism** ³, and this is a situation which still remains in the interests of the imperialist powers - and not only in those of the bourgeoisie in Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria. Consequently, not only is it impossible that the imperialist governments will provide any kind of "aid" for the war of the exploited Kurds for their national and social liberation, but also that this liberation in itself **necessarily** involves a **combined** struggle against both the directly exploiting bourgeoisie and imperialism.

2) The Kurdish bourgeoisie has **progressively withdrawn** from pursuing national-revolutionary objectives, substantially abandoning even the objective of self-determination within the borders of the individual oppressor-states. Although feeling themselves sacrificed by being placed in the position of a wretched sub-bourgeoisie, and thus continuing to maintain resistance organisations and to take part in - and sometimes even prompting - the national struggle, they have increasingly adapted themselves to a position of **collaboration** with the bourgeoisies of the area, with imperialism and - internally - with a landowning class which has been only partially weaned from tribal customs. The Kurdish bourgeoisie feels the breath of the anger and exasperation of the exploited masses on its neck - and defends itself. The inconsistency, double-crossing and downright betrayal of the national cause on the part of the various PDKs and PUKs, etc., is due to this permanent class interest - and not to the contingent "errors" of evaluation of certain charismatic "individuals".

3) Given that this has also contributed towards the accentuation of the

³ Here, we do not include the oppression suffered by the Kurds at the hands of the Ottoman Empire, against which there were fifty Kurdish insurrections in the nineteenth century; this was an oppression whose benefits were subsequently largely "taken over" by Western imperialism.

national and **social** oppression of the young proletariat and the rural and urban masses of Kurdistan, it is these classes which need to take **directly** upon their own shoulders (rejecting any form of delegation to traditional feudal-bourgeois leaderships) **all** of the responsibility for the liberation struggle - beginning with the task (which already risks becoming rancid) of effectively creating unity among the Kurdish working masses. In this struggle, they can **only** count upon the strength (which is, nevertheless, potentially enormous) of the exploited masses of the Middle East and of **the international proletariat**, who share the historical interest of overthrowing the capitalist system.

Anyone who looks honestly at the experience of the Kurdish national-revolutionary movement as a whole will realise that ours is not just a daydream. While suffering from the negative effects of the past and present trials of the international communist and proletarian movement, the Kurdish people's struggle has been marked by two profound changes. **On a social level**, its baricentre has shifted from the small landowners to the exploited classes; **on a political level**, it has moved from an increasingly moderate bourgeois nationalism (almost always **sub-nationalism**) towards the **first** expression of Marxist and international class tendencies. Among these, the experience of **Komala**, the Kurdish organisation of the Communist Party of Iran, has seemed to us particularly significant. Regardless of its current position (of which we know very little), and even if it is admitted that, in its isolation, it may have returned to its populist-Maoist origins (or even lower) ⁴, since the first half of the 1980's, Komala has represented the **most advanced** attempt to interpret and resolve the Kurdish question in class terms (not "perfect" because it wasn't; nor could it have been even the most Bolshevik of the revolutionary organisations **taken separately**, particularly in an ultra-backward country). It was an experience which, not by chance, was made possible only by the impulse of a "popular" uprising of vaster proportions (the insurrection which overthrew the regime of the Shah) and - within it - of a "young Marxism" interested in knotting the thread again with the revolutionary tradition of the III International. And which could go forward for a time also thanks to its ability to draw oxygen from a metropolitan working class conflict which was more acute than it is today.

We are sure that **if** the vanguard of Kurdish workers takes all of this into due account, the recent defeat might not have been in vain.

⁴ We still lack **precise** and **direct** information about the life of the CPI over the last four years, but all the information we have lead us to believe that a profound and probably catastrophic theoretical and political decline has taken place in this organisation

On the side of the oppressed Kurds or of the super-butcher, Schwarzkopf

Much, if not almost everything, naturally depends on the help that the metropolitan proletariat and communists give to the Kurdish masses. (We are not talking here about immediate aid in terms of food and clothing, because even this - which the imperialists see as a sign of their generosity - is **exclusively** the fruit of the labour and exploitation of the workers; and it would be better not to forget it. We are talking about political aid, which is also the **highest form of material support**). In this regard, things fluctuate between bad and worse: recognising the fact and **denouncing it** is the only way of overcoming the existing situation.

For a certain (**capitalist**) "left", the dramatic events in Iraqi Kurdistan - instead of representing an opportunity for demonstrating an authentic solidarity towards the oppressed Kurds and, consequently, a violent denunciation of their oppressors (those in Italy, first of all) - provides a chance of moving in the direction of the **most unbridled chauvinist extremism**. For example, the 8 April edition of "l'Unità" included an article by Paolo Flores D'Arcais which is more or less indicative of a **mood** that is gaining ground in the "left" - including a good part of the "pacifist" movement. In it he says that, if the Kurds are having to flee and die, it's the fault of those people who didn't want the war against Saddam to be taken to its final conclusion.

"One thing is certain," he says, "hundreds of thousands of men, women, old people and children would not have lost their lives if the "Bear"⁵, General Schwarzkopf, had been able to continue the war for a couple of days more. That couple of days of "peace" condemned hundreds of thousands to annihilation."

Anathema, then, against the extremely timid and totally insufficient "peace" demonstrations and, above all, for the "absence of mass demonstrations" which would have given a second "go-ahead" to Schwarzkopf, whose hands were still dripping with the hot blood of hundreds and thousands (and this time, the figures are real!) of Iraqis **and Kurds**. Nor does he stop here.

"With or without the UN, in respect or otherwise of international law, Saddam should have been fought and his arsenal destroyed,

⁵ While remaining in the animal kingdom - as is only right - for us he is not a "bear" but a **pig**.

because his intention was to spread his bloody dictatorship over the entire area of the Gulf, in the form of a local imperialist hegemony, with the declared objective of then suppressing the Sionists - that is to say, Israel."

Putting aside any legal conformism, from now on the "left" should be ready, in the name of its "**values**", to take up arms on the side of the Schwarzkopfs of the moment against "lukewarm diplomats" such as ... Bush.

But what are these "values"? "To save the Kurds from genocide"? To ensure "the human rights of each and everyone"? Aaaah! If the fate of the Kurds really meant something to these people, they would not have "discovered" the fact only when their tragedy provides a convenient way of justifying the further devastation of Iraq; they would not have rubbed their hands with pleasure at the "success" of an imperialist aggression which has also been a "Storm" (= **massacre**) in Kurdistan; they would not be silent accomplices to the cynical trap laid by the USA against the Kurdish population; they would not remain silent in the face of the infamies which continue to be perpetrated against these people, not only in Iraq, but also in "friendly" Turkey and Syria, and "neutral" Iran; and, above all, they should have something to say against the repeated and **categorical denial** - on the part of the "allies" - **of the right to self-determination on the part of the Kurds**. If the liberal-democrats and the democrats, whether they are inside or outside the PDS, really cared something about the "liberty of the people" and "human rights" in the countries subjected to "bloody dictatorships", they would call for an implacable struggle against imperialist capitalism as a whole - which is the Number 1 oppressor of "peoples' liberties" and the Number 1 beneficiary of all of the "bloody dictatorships" in the countries dominated by imperialism - whose bestial terroristic methods are the **unrenounceable** (for imperialism, not just for the dependent bourgeoisie) bases for metropolitan affluence and "democracy".

But, in the eyes of people like Flores D'Arcais, this would be the greatest of all crimes: the "**values**" upon which they base their invocations (and preparations) for an **imperialist** "holy war" - "with or without the UN" - are, in fact, the values of the "liberty" of imperialist democracies to exploit and dominate the proletariat everywhere; to dictate the laws over oppressed people everywhere and, if necessary - **and it will be necessary** - to rewrite the "laws of the UN"; to uproot and destroy any force which dares to challenge the **world** "imperialist hegemony" of the West; to protect with all of the means at its disposal not only the "Sionists" who oppress the Palestinians, but also its twins - such as, for example, those paradises of "human rights for each and everyone" which is the feudal Emirate of Kuwait or, to stay in Arabia, the Saudi autocracy. The real essence of this apparent peroration in favour of the "salvation" of the Kurds is, then, to safeguard the greatest possible freedom of action for capital (as ever, the greatest of all "values"). Beyond the

momentarily useful pretext of Saddam, the real enemy to fight without quarter (not even "a couple of days of peace" ...) is the threatening army of the Arab-Muslim masses and the "periphery". And the real target of this hysterical attack is not the extremely innocuous "pacifism" (which, as its own leadership has proudly declared, is anything but neutral), but that minimum of anti-militaristic feeling, that minimum of resistance against becoming active supporters of the war-plans of their "own" imperialism which, despite everything, **still exists** among the working classes and which, unless it is eliminated in time, **could develop** in the future into **anti-capitalist war potential**. The comrades who expect the PDS to provide "new answers" to "new problems" would do well to think all this over: the "new responses" which this new-born formation will nail to the mast-head are, as we have shown, **anti-proletarian and anti-communist** to the core.

If we pass from the most extreme wing of the PDS to the so-called "pacifists", things are not much better. Leaving aside that considerable portion of the "pacifist" movement which is already infected by the arguments of liberal-democratic chauvinism, let us consider the **more genuine** (less ideological) **grass roots** element of the "peace movement", which has tried to offer the Kurdish masses a solidarity which is something more than simply asking for the continuation of the devastation in Iraq. These elements have praiseworthy feelings and intentions but are incredibly **contradictory** in their political analysis and, consequently, are lost in deciding what to do.

At least in part, they show signs of understanding that the sacrosanct denunciation of the repression of the Baghdad regime is only one aspect - and perhaps only the "simplest" aspect - of the question. Consequently, there is an attempt to broaden the responsibility and to go back to the **colonial divisions** of the 1920's. But this partition is frequently seen wrongly, as if it were the USSR (at that time anything but a colonialist state - rather, a point of reference in the anti-colonial struggle) and the four countries among which the Kurdish people are now divided which were responsible for the partition; instead of understanding that the **true protagonists** of a partition which is still canonised by international law and which is the **real source** of the oppression of the Kurds (Saddam hadn't even been conceived ...) were the great **democratic** imperialist powers of Great Britain, France and the United States. These were the powers which controlled (completely or in part) the countries which were the direct "beneficiaries" - two of which only existed on paper - of the partition of Kurdistan. What's more, we continue to hear only of the **complicity** of the West with the countries directly oppressing the Kurds, as if the relationship between imperialism and Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria was a relationship between **equals** (which it isn't), and as if the West was simply a "look-out" (which is true neither in this latest episode of the Kurdish drama, nor in the many which have gone before). But what is more illogical than anything else is that, having identified (albeit only in part) the

responsibility of the great powers, many "genuine pacifists" turn once again to the "international community", the United Nations, international law and international "peace" conferences to ask for the recognition of the "right of the Kurdish people to self-determination"; that is, to the very **imperialist** institutions and forces which for almost a century, and for political and material reasons whose weight has **increased** since 1923, have been **responsible for the oppression**. Is it possible that the victim has no other alternative than to put himself back into the hands of his butcherers?

This is and will continue to be the case until the point of reference for the liberation of all of the exploited and oppressed in the world is no longer the "international community" of bourgeois states dominated by the banks, bombs and laws of the imperialist powers, but **our** "international community": THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY OF THE INTERESTS AND ACTION OF THE PROLETARIAT AND WORKERS. Only if this "small", but practical and "logical" step is taken, will we be able to cut at the roots of those social relationships which continuously regenerate conditions of torment for the exploited classes, and clear the ground (the most extraordinary land recovery of all time!) of the Bushes, the Schwarzkopfs, the Saddam Husseins and the Flores D'Arcais. That will be the life! However, even for the burning issues of today, it is only by working in **this** direction that no grist will be brought to the mills of the bougeoisie.

(Form "Che Fare", No. 21, May-June 1991)

THE IMPERIALIST WAR CONTINUES USING THE WEAPONS OF "PEACE"

What is the situation in the Middle East, six months after the "liberation" of Kuwait? "The Washington Post" of 3 September offered this clear reply:

"There is still a lot of work to do before the United States can afford to leave the Gulf."

And, despite the multiplication in the number of "official" reports (from the UN, the Clark Commission, Greenpeace, Harvard University, "Médecins pour la prévention d'une guerre atomique", etc.) and the publication of "revelations" about the abominable horrors of Operation "Desert Massacre", the same newspaper is careful to explain that, also in Iraq, the "work" of the allies is not finished - *"there's still a lot to be done"*. There is absolutely no way that the grip on Iraq and the Middle East can be relaxed. Despite the expectations of *"good-hearted Americans"* (admitted by the paper), even the sanctions must continue until all of the pre-established objectives of the UN and the United States have been reached. Consequently, the imperialist aggression against the Iraqi and Middle Eastern masses continues.

The UN and the allies are starving Iraq

Despite the devastation, the "Iraqi problem" has still not been completely resolved; just as, despite the democratic return to the throne of His Excellency the Emir (**by the hands of the military**), the "rebirth" of Kuwait is proving to be more difficult than expected. This wealthiest of Anglo-American protectorates finds itself faced with "an economic crisis that has led to the stagnation of the whole process of reconstruction", and which has brought with it the previously unheard of phenomena of serious unemployment and a high rate of inflation. Even the victors find themselves ill at ease in the face of this socio-political situation: disaffection with the Sovereign and his Court seems

to be spreading, to the extent that the Emir (dissatisfied with the performance of his own anti-subversive gangs) has welcomed a permanent yankee garrison. The "day after", **there are no signs of rejoicing among the masses** of Kuwait and the Arabian peninsula (as the Western journalists, sent "down there" to record for the world the August 2 "celebrations" of Kuwait's refound "liberty", were shaken to discover), but there is **a lot of worry about the future among the pro-imperialist regimes**. This is eloquently expressed by the formidable acceleration in their re-armament, and by the decision of the USA and its allies to postpone the complete demobilisation of their troops from Saudi Arabia, the Emirates and Iraqi Kurdistan ¹.

But beyond the chaos facing Kuwait, and the first indications of financial and social instability of all of the semi-feudal kingdoms, the most pungent contradiction (for the imperialists) is post-war Iraq. The Western attempt to have Saddam Hussein overthrown "by the people" (a "people" which, in addition, would praise their new colonialist "liberators") has failed. Although it has been hurled backwards by at least a century, and is now suffering from starvation, epidemics, the wildfire spread of a black market and every other kind of speculation (not to mention the effects of an iron-fisted embargo), Iraq is showing signs of recovery and a new vitality. And what is worse from the point of view of imperialist interests, despite being enormously tried by the war, disappointed in its result and grumbling (with good reason) against the Baa'thist regime, the **exploited masses** of Iraq (and not only of Iraq) are hostile to the oppressive post-war resolutions of the UN, and share Baghdad's demand for an end to the international embargo.

Well-aware of the general feeling of the Arab populations concerning this

¹ The USA evidently have no intention of withdrawing **all** of their armed forces from the Gulf: these were sent to Arabia not only for the war against Iraq, but also to remain permanently in protection of American interests in the area. However, the Pentagon hoped to be able to reduce to **minimum** the contingent in Arabia in order to be able to move on without delay to "new peace missions". For the moment, it seems that these hopes are obstructed by the incomplete "shut down" of the contradictions in Iraq. As for the "new peace missions", immediately after having concluded "Desert Massacre", the American Council of Chiefs-of-staff headed by Gen. Powell was quick to point out that *"after the Gulf, the Korean peninsula runs the greatest risk of provoking a limited ground war", by launching the watch-word "Eyes on North Korea!"* ("The Economist", 28/9/91). We can be sure that the publicity barrage concerning Yankee "historical proposals" for the disarmament **of others** will lead, among other things, to new "wars for peace" against any country which tries **in any way** to resist post-Cold War imperialist injunctions.

issue, even Mubarak has (verbally) repeated this demand; but he was soon called to order (the "new international order") by "The Washington Post": it would be *"a particularly dangerous error"* to even consider withdrawing the embargo. The only possibility would be a temporary relaxation that would permit the milking of "war reparations" from Iraq, and increase the penetration within it of "civil" contingents of the imperialist powers (under the pretext of the direct "humanitarian" distribution of food) which would reinforce the possibility of control from the inside. If the Iraqi government were to reject such an oppressive claim as *"an intolerable affront to its national sovereignty"*, so much the better for the Western democracies: according to the Washington Post,

"this would make it clear in the eyes of the world that it is Saddam who is starving Iraqi children, not the UN embargo".

The "new international order" of "peace" proposed by the imperialist democracies was presented to the exploited of Iraq and the Middle East in the terms of Resolutions 705, 706 and 707 of the United Nations, by which the Security Council graciously, and exceptionally (for 6 months), allows Iraq to extract oil for a value of 2,000 billion dollars. The income from the sale of this oil will be entirely confiscated by the "allies". The Arabian and Western "Emirs" will receive 600 billion as "war reparations" (the greatest beneficiary will be America's military-industrial complex which, by means of the war, has assured itself enormous orders from the Oil Monarchies). One hundred thousand will go to establishing "the world's first industry of disarmament", under the supervision of the world's leading arms producers, arms holders and arms merchants. The remaining 1,300 will be taken by a special UN organisation responsible for purchasing food and medicines and distributing them directly in Iraq. Dividing this figure by the 18,000,000 inhabitants of Iraq and the 180 days of the relaxation of the embargo, the result speaks for itself: **400 lire a head per day for food and medicine!** If we include bribes, backhanders, embezzlement, "under the table" funds and "golden salaries" for the distributors, etc. (all of which form a part of every capitalistic charitable enterprise - particularly if it is international), this figure will be no more than 250-300 lire.

"Humanitarian" starvation guaranteed: what's more, the imperialist states involved are preparing to manage this "aid" in such a way that the blackmail of starvation breaks and divides the masses. And to think that the British and Americans insist on raising the percentage of "war damages" from 30% to 50%, and that the banks have already booked for themselves not less than 20% of the income deriving from any future "exceptions". We may well be accused by the "pacifist" defenders of "true" international law of taking an ideological view of the facts - but what do we care about the opinion of people who have never made any attempt to clearly denounce this infamy? For we Marxists,

the "peace" imposed on Iraq which, according to the report of Harvard University, will lead to the death from malnutrition and starvation of 170,000 Iraqi children over the next year, is nothing other than **the continuation of the imperialist war** by means which are no less merciless than those of arms - even assuming that the American super-bombers will not return for a second, and "definitive" mission of "peace".

The **ultimate aim** of this "pacification" is the same as that of the war itself: to re-establish Western control over the supply of Middle-Eastern oil and to put the Arab-Muslim masses, "guilty" of repeatedly rebelling against the imperialist order, back under the heel of the USA & Company - with **just a little more** exploitation and oppression than before the war. The fate reserved for Iraq must be seen along these lines: a warning to the Iraqi masses, a warning to the exploited "coloured" multitudes, a warning to the metropolitan working class of what they will come up against if they oppose the capitalist super-States.

Given the partial failure of the Kurdish and Shi'ite "cards" and the impossibility of immediately overturning Saddam's policy, depriving the Iraqi government of its powers (except, as we have seen, those connected with internal policing) and placing the Iraqi economy and institutions under **direct** imperialist control are, together with maintaining the embargo, indispensable steps in the process of "pacification". But this **direct** involvement of the United States and the rest of Western imperialism in the re-establishment of their exploitative order in the Middle East is a clear sign of how precarious, here and in the "Third World" in general, financial capital's preferred form of control is becoming: **indirect** control through its paid semi-feudal or bourgeois lackeys. So "The Washington Post" is right, the Gulf War was just the beginning:

"there's still a lot of work to be done before the United States (and its allies) can allow themselves the luxury of leaving the Gulf".

The aggression of the imperialist West against the proletariat and the oppressed Arab-Muslim masses continues.

A Conference for imperialist "peace"

Special treatment will, of course, be reserved for the Palestinians, now called upon to pay the price of their half-century long revolutionary struggle (and, more recently, their plebiscitarian pro-Iraq stance): the imperialist denial of their national self-determination will be **more resolute and unanimous than ever**.

It is difficult to predict the form and effects of the Middle East "peace" Conference so busily being organised by the White House, because of all of

the international (not least the boycott on the part of marginalised Europe) and regional unknowns which make, if not its convocation, at least its "positive" development uncertain. But whatever else, one thing is already certain: **the framework of the Conference excludes the claims of the Palestinian and Arab masses.**

The fundamental aims of the Bush administration are unequivocal: first, to consolidate, on the basis of the Camp David agreements and under the patronage of the United States (the "support" role of the USSR is just a show), the political and economic ties between Israel and the Arab States (neighbouring or otherwise), by forcing the latter to recognise without reservation the State that they have been accusing of colonialism and racism for the last forty years. Secondly, to liquidate the question of a **Palestinian State** once and for all by establishing a joint Israeli and Jordanian mandate over the so-called "occupied territories" (with Jerusalem already a de facto part of Israel), and by co-opting the Palestinian bourgeoisie, now in the minor tasks of local administration, and later in the repressive functions required by the regime of **triple repression** of the exploited Palestinian masses which the Conference is intended to "legalise".

Profiting from the defeat of Iraq, the vulture Baker is attempting to put into practice the design for imperialist stabilisation drawn up by Kissinger ten years ago. This excluded the establishment of a Palestinian State because:

*"The last thing the Middle East needs is another local extremist State hostile towards all of the existing institutions. It would not only be against the interests of the United States, but also against the interests of the moderate Arab states whose well-being we have every reason to defend. In addition, beyond their public declarations, these countries understand this perfectly ... Our European allies must realise that, by putting forward unworkable projects [the reference is to the Palestinian "mini-State" blandly supported **on paper** by European governments for many years - Ed.], they are encouraging extremism and making a situation of stall inevitable ... In the current circumstances [this was just after the 1979 insurrection in Iran, but Kissinger could repeat the same thing today with even more emphasis - Ed.], an independent Palestinian State would feel itself authorised to subvert its neighbouring moderate governments, particularly in Jordan, if only to get out of taking those inevitable measures of demilitarisation without which any kind of Israeli withdrawal would be inconceivable" ².*

² H. Kissinger, **Punti fermi**, Mondadori, 1981, pp. 336-7. Italian translation of H. Kissinger, **For the record**, Little, Brown and Company, Washington DC, 1980.

Well: what combination of circumstances could be favourable than those of the present for cutting not only the Iraqi, but also the Palestinian knot? The European governments have stopped "putting forward unworkable projects", just as European social-democrats (increasingly aligned with their governments) have stopped insisting on the "indispensable role" of the PLO. With the war, the "Sadatisation" of the Arab bourgeoisie has made a real **leap forward** ³, to the extent that, while "liberated" Kuwait cuts down, tortures and disperses the Palestinians, the majority of Arab governments do not do much even to hide their indifference; on the contrary, they take this moment to freeze their relationships (not to mention their supplies) with a PLO that has never been as estranged as it is today from the "extremism" and anti-Westernism mentioned in Kissinger's accusations. Even the Ba'athists in Iraq (despite the fact that they are the ones who have most recently re-introduced the question - and with what "clamour"!) are now openly questioning the very idea of pan-Arab unity, and with it the patronage of the Palestinian liberation struggle.

At the opposite extreme, the State of Israel, despite being bogged down by its growing socio-economic contradictions, benefits from diplomatic and economic overtures without precedent (the most conspicuous being De Michelis' proposal to admit Israel into "Europe's economic space"; how many times have we warned Palestinian militants against believing, even at what they called only "a tactical level" (?), in the pro-Palestinian line of Italy's imperialist policy!), and makes use of these overtures to expand its colonisation of Palestinian territory and to strike undisturbed against the popular uprising.

This is a situation which, aided by the difficulties and tiredness of the Intifadah, fans the embers of imperialist revenge: *"This is a historic opportunity for pacifying, stabilising and disarming the area of the Middle East. We mustn't let it slip through our fingers,"* Bush has declared; this time calling for a **real** halt to the Zionist extremism which, with its "excesses", risks compromising the entire process of imperialist "pacification". But **will imperialism be able to take this "historic opportunity"?**

³ The most obvious example of this is the "new" position of Syria. Unlike the democrats, what we Marxists contest is not the fact of Lebanon rejoining to Syria, but Assad's cooperation with the imperialist *"pax Americana"*. In any case, what needs to be contested about the rejoining of Lebanon to Syria is certainly not - **if indeed it should happen**- the overcoming of the reactionary cantonal or religious sub-divisions so dear to the Pope, Formigoni and Mitterand, but that it has taken place under the banner of the repression and "directed" disarmament of the Palestinian masses and Lebanese plebeian extremism.

In "Che Fare" No.21, we said: it cannot be excluded that the process of imperialist "pacification" will make some limited progress in the near future; but if this happens, however, it will not be on the basis of "fair" solutions which will be lastingly acceptable to the the oppressed Arab-Muslim masses (beginning with the Palestinians), but rather on the basis of **"insubstantial and reactionary pseudo-solutions"** destined to reveal their fragility and their oppressive nature in the face of an unavoidable reawakening of the revolutionary movement in the Middle East.

The six months since the "end" of the war have already served to underline how hypocritical was the allied promise of the democratisation of the oil monarchies; how evanescent was the prospect of a redistribution among the rich and poor countries of the Arab world; and how tragically illusory were the Kurdish hopes of having found in the U.S. the defender of their cause (that same Bush administration which, together with the other allies present in Kurdistan - including the "impeccable" Italian troops, has given and continues to provide cover and logistic aid to the anti-Kurdish operations of Ozal's Turkey). And yet, Washington's "peace" plans seem to be achieving some results - at least on one level: the preparation of the Middle East Conference. The nth step backwards of the PLO at Algiers **with its acceptance of the coordinates of the "pax Americana"** leaves open the possibility that, if nothing else, the Conference may begin without immediately being wrecked during its opening session, thus giving the impression, by means of the prospect (over a period of time) of an extremely limited and highly conditional withdrawal of Israel from the area of Ghaza and Trans-Jordan, that the Palestinian question is making a first step "forward".

But neither the overwhelmingly majority decision of the Palestinian National Council, nor Arafat's increasingly vacuous and false demagogy, are capable of disguising the fact that what imperialism is demanding is a declaration of **surrender**, and that the "peace" of 1991 is **even more iniquitous** than that of 1948. It is not for nothing that the stars and stripes "peace" proposal finds the Palestinian movement, both inside and outside the territories, **more divided than ever before** - and divided along no longer mystifying **class lines**.

Catalysed by the force (as well as realigned by the brutal blackmail) of the great Arab bourgeoisie - a sliver, and perhaps more, of which has "Palestinian blood" flowing in its veins - the Palestian micro-bourgeoisie of production and trade, the professions and the (albeit meagre) administrative and diplomatic apparatus, appears to be more than ready, even **desirous** of a "compromise" with imperialism; a "compromise" even of the meanest kind, providing it serves to defuse an Intifadah which, in Palestine, as well as in Kuwait and the rest of the Arab world, has put its business affairs ⁴ and its international credibility in increasing difficulties. With even greater disquiet, the same result is being looked for by what remains of the old class of landowners and clan notables, over-represented in the Palestinian National

Council, in whose eyes the uprising of the last few years is to blame for having badly shaken the entire "world" of the traditions (i.e. consolidated relationships of exploitation) which legitimised their pre-eminence in pre-"colonisation" Palestinian society.

On the other hand, for the young Palestinian proletariat, as super-exploited in Israel as "at home", and for the Palestinian working masses in the territories and in the diaspora, a "peace" which liquidates the historical claims of the liberation struggle means nothing less than the stabilisation (if not the worsening) of the existing conditions of oppression and exploitation. It is no accident that the generation of young "proletarians" who have the experience of the Intifadah behind them, and who may or may not identify themselves with the "Islamic alternative" of Hamas, have already renamed "Black October" what Faysal Husseini and **his class** call (however cautiously) an "October of hope".

Unity in the struggle of the exploited in the Middle East and in the West can no longer be postponed

Once again, the Palestinian question both summarises and symbolises the imperialist oppression of the **entire** Middle East and, as has happened for the last half century, the imperialist pretension to annul it will have no other long-term effect than to strengthen its explosive social and political potential in the face of Israel, the Arab States (and not only those which are traditionally "moderate") and the entire imperialist order in the Middle East.

The Arab-Muslim world (and not only Palestine) has profoundly changed over the last ten years. It is now the fertile base of a continuous anti-imperialist

⁴ With reference to the Intifadah and bourgeois Palestinian business interests, "Il Sole-24 Ore" (24/4/91) had this to say:

*"West Bank entrepreneurs seem to have got used to living with the Intifadah which, as one of them pointed out, is not just a rebellion against an occupying State, but **the excuse for a sort of rebellion against the system and, in certain respects, a type of class struggle.** It is no accident that, with the coming of the Intifadah, the trade unions have taken on a **determining weight**, for example by forcing companies to **reduce working time from 12 to 8 hours a day** and to pay their employees even for days of national strike or for absences caused by attending anti-Israeli demonstrations".*

Bearing all of this in mind, it is not difficult to understand how these entrepreneurs (and other members of the Palestinian bourgeoisie of greater weight) would be happy to live ... without the Intifadah, particularly if - as Europe and America suggest - the Israeli bourgeoisie decided to leave them a little more space on the market.

mobilisation which is increasingly reducing the space for manoeuvre of "old-style" Arab bourgeois nationalism by clearly demonstrating its growing cowardice. The Gulf War, and now the imperialist attempt to "pacify" the region, have pushed this process even further, **deepening the gap between the property-owning and the working classes of the Arab-Muslim world.** After such a bitter defeat, we do not expect that there will be an immediate ideological-political confirmation of this increased class polarisation. But it is already possible to see that the organisations of struggle, born from the crucible of the mass uprising against the aggression suffered by Iraq, are increasingly accepting that the exploited masses of the Middle East must unite in taking upon their own shoulders the struggle against imperialist domination which the Arab bourgeoisie and the Islamic regime of Teheran continue to avoid.

One of these organisations, the Jordanian Committee of the Amman Declaration for the Union of the Struggle of Iraq and Palestine, has expressed this need with a certain (albeit relative, of course!) clarity:

*"It is clear", one of its Resolutions declares, "that the struggle against (imperialist) aggression **cannot be limited to a national or regional scale, because it is the Arab nation as a whole which is under attack. It is for this reason that a united struggle of all Arab peoples is necessary. At the same time, given the current state of things, the common struggle of the Arab peoples in Iraq, Palestine and Jordan is a matter of urgency because these three countries are now the main target of the imperialist invasion ... These peoples no longer have any other choice than to use all available means to fight the decisive battle against imperialism, Sionism, reactionary Arab regimes and all of the other regional forces involved in the conspiracy; in order to create a union of struggle which will form the nucleus of a future global Arab union ... The Arab masses, together with all of their forces and all of their organisations, are called upon to take part in the movement and in the common struggle ..**" It continues: "(it is necessary to) insist on the democratic nature of this programmed union of struggle and on the **permanent struggle for strengthening the effective participation of the masses in taking the decisions which affect their lives and future.**" (From "Solidaire", 19 June 1991).*

What is interesting about the adoption of a position such as this on the part of a national-popular organisation with a mass following is the fact that, albeit within the perspective of the "anti-imperialist" unity of the Arab **nation**, considerable stress is placed on the **masses** (exploited, we would add) and on the **active** role they should play, as well as on the need for the unity of "all the Arab peoples". No less interesting is the fact that this appeal does not refer to any "guiding regime" or mythical "Knight of the Arab nation" (Saddam

is not even mentioned) and concludes with an invitation and commitment to "*strengthening*" relationships between "*popular Arab national movements*", political and **trade union** organisations in the common struggle against "*imperialism, Sionism and reaction*".

Isn't this pure proletarian internationalism? Banal, of course. But what some of the people who contradict us still seem to find highly obscure is that even this resolution (and others like it) reveal a shift in the baricentre of the struggle against imperialism from Arab **states** and **bourgeoisies** (with all of their Rais, Zaim, etc.) to the **oppressed Arab working masses**; together with an **objective** appeal for **the unity of the exploited** which goes far beyond the borders of the Arab or even the Islamic world (borders which, although apparently wide, are too narrow for fighting and overthrowing the world imperialist system). The struggle against the strangulation of Iraq and the starving of the Iraqi masses, against the liquidation of the Palestinian cause and against the crushing and disarmament of the masses of the Middle East (all of which are the aims of the "new imperialist order") are, and must increasingly become, part of the struggle of the proletariat and communists of the metropoli. The class enemy of "all of the Arab peoples" is our own class enemy!

(From "Che fare", No. 22, November-December 1991)

Appendix

LETTER ON THE GULF WAR TO OUR FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS

The latest issue of the journal of our organisation ("Che fare", No. 19, Sept.-Oct. 1990) was almost entirely dedicated to the question of the "crisis in the Gulf", because we consider this to be of the greatest importance both in terms of the future development of the international class struggle and in terms of the definition of a consistent revolutionary communist political line.

Given that Italian is non readily understood in other parts of the world, what follows is a summary -in English and in French- of the main aspects of our position.

We hope that this will offer the greatest possible opportunity for an exchange of views and proposal within the international revolutionary "*milieu*".

Obviously, the situation in the Gulf is due to a number of different factors: conflicts among imperialist powers, conflicts between these imperialist powers and local regional "micropowers", and the conflicts which divide these local powers among themselves. All of this is perfectly true. But there is a fourth factor which is often either completely ignored or relegated to a subordinate position; and that is the **truly imperialist nature of the aggression of the West** (internally divided by particular interests and appetites, but united in this "holy" counter- revolutionary operation) **against the disinherited Arab-Islamic masses**. For us, it is precisely this aspect which any authentic revolutionary communist should put first because all of other factors are both connected to and depend upon it. And, even more particularly, because it is upon this aspect that the future destiny of our antagonistic line depends: the international proletariat against the international bourgeoisie.

It is in this light that we should see the conflict with the regime of Saddam Hussein. In the eyes of Western imperialism, Iraq's unforgivable blame has been its attempt to preserve a certain degree of economic and political "autonomy" from the West, offering a certain degree of resistance to the imperialist squeezes. While it is true that Saddam Hussein's regime does not deserve any sympathy or support from revolutionary communists and, given that it is acting only in its own bourgeois interests, it does not express

the real needs and aspiration of the oppressed masses of Iraq (and, even less, those of the entire area), it is also true that this fact reinforces the essential aspect of the current conflict: the direct attack of the West against the disinherited masses. If even this minimal attempt at **bourgeois** "autonomy" on the part of **one country** in the Middle East is considered an obstacle to the interests of imperialist capital, it is easy to imagine the reaction to the much more serious danger represented by a sacrosanct revolt of the oppressed masses aimed at the **destruction** of the "international order" that enslaves them. Somebody like Saddam Hussein can make himself the interested -and, naturally, "inconsequent"- spokesman of these aspirations only because the essential conflict is still concealed behind a thousand masks and, **above all**, because the Western proletariat still fails to give any serious or tangible sign of its solidarity with the Arab-Islamic masses; a sign which should begin with an unconditional struggle against the "enemy at home" and unconditional support for the rebellion of the exploited in the Middle East, **regardless** of the form, level of consciousness or level of organisation that this rebellion may have at this moment.

This is the question which lies behind the facade of the conflict between all of the "free world" (plus the local servants of imperialism) and Iraq. But two factors are necessary if this conflict is to be placed within a revolutionary perspective: 1) the exploited masses of Middle East must take upon themselves the organisation of struggle against Western imperialism, radicalising it and extending it beyond the borders of the countries "immediately" interested; 2) this struggle must be related to that of the metropolitan proletariat who, in the final analysis, need to demonstrate that the only consistent way forward is that of international revolutionary communism.

We note that, as far as the first point is concerned, important results are being obtained by the spread of the anti-imperialist "contagious disease" from Iraq to Jordan, to occupied Palestine, to Lebanon, Egypt, etc., and that there is an increasingly pressing demand for the arming of the masses throughout the area. We recognize in all of this a fact of extreme revolutionary importance and we point out that this represents an objective obstacle to the possibility that the Iraqi regime might be able to exploit the conflict for its own national bourgeois aims and that it provides a real threat to the foundations upon which the regime itself is built.

Unfortunately, in the West, neither the "reformists" (who have more or less aligned themselves with "national" imperialist interests) nor even the so-called revolutionary vanguards have made a similar step forward. The majority of so-called revolutionary communists present the conflict in purely inter-imperialist terms, putting both Iraq and the West on the same level (if not worse!), that is putting on the same level the imperialist super-powers as a whole and a national bourgeoisie which is forced, under the imperialist yoke, to make an

inconcludent search for its own relative "autonomy". In general, insufficient attention is given to what we have called the essential aspect of the question: an imperialist attack against what is their real target, the disinherited masses of the Middle East. Today, this attack is being carried out *via* Saddam Hussein; but what would happen tomorrow if these masses were to act **independently** of Hussein or of the other apparently "anti-imperialist" regimes or local ideologies?

Many of these "vanguard" forces preach a strange kind of internationalism: our duty is to fight "our own" bourgeoisie and, **in the same way**, the masses of the Middle East should fight "their **equally** reactionary" bourgeoisies. This is an "effective" way of avoiding the substance of the current imperialist aggression and of defaming the fighting response that these masses, in any case, ardently feel the need to give.

In some cases, they even go as far as to create a type of "revolutionary" Western chauvinism, such as when they reprove these "shapeless" masses ("hardly purely proletarian", unlike in the West!) of not knowing how to make themselves independent of regimes like that of Saddam Hussein. In these cases, internationalism is invoked **against** the anti-imperialist struggle, and not in support of it or in terms of leadership. This certainly has nothing to do with the Bolshevik communist internationalism which, at Bakù in 1920, attempted to **weld together**, within a **single** revolutionary socialist perspective, both the "pure" proletarian struggle in the metropoli and anti-imperialist revolts in the colonies and dominions.

Very differently, we hold that the response of the exploited masses against Western aggression contains, in itself and at the highest level, all of the potential for passing from the hands of "anti-imperialist" bourgeois regimes and more or less "Islamic" ideologies of "liberation", into the hands of the exploited masses themselves. We also hold that this mass response, if pursued with decision, represents the only authentic threat to the exploitation of its anti-imperialist aspirations on the part of similar forces and that it also serves as a powerful reminder of the need to develop the anti-capitalist struggle here in the metropoli. We need to provide an appropriate response to this reminder. Our revolutionary communist interests lie -we repeat- in effectively supporting the anti- imperialist insurgence of the exploited masses of the Middle East without laying down any conditions other than those of encouraging the radicalisation and spread of the insurgence itself. They lie in denouncing Western imperialism as the only real aggressor and in denying any "right" to existence of Kuweiti- type petty despotisms (pure and simple protectorates artfully created by the imperialists in order to "balkanise" the region). They lie in denouncing, without any half- measures, the apologia of the UN (a real "den of imperialist bandits" - and their servants) which, here in Italy, is widespread even among those forces which claim to be revolutionary (naturally in the sense of being .. anti-American). They lie in embracing each and every

element of opposition on the part of the proletariat to the policy of "necessary sacrifices" inevitably associated with the current crusade and in encouraging the immediate proletarian struggle with the aim to bring in it the awareness that the attack against the proletariat here is part and parcel of the same attack against the Arab-Islamic masses and that, therefore, even for the achievement of immediate claims, it is necessary to establish an anti-capitalist political programme (which means a programme against any tendency, including those of "ultra-left", to separate trade union and political activities). We are not indulging in sterile optimism. We realize very well the hard condition of isolation of the Arab-Islamic masses and therefore we do not exclude the possibility that, in the short term, there may be a simple negotiated settlement (with or without previous armed action) between Western imperialism and the local bourgeoisie **over the heads** of the masses. This, however, does not mean that the entire situation will have been resolved nor should it be seen as providing an *a posteriori* alibi for the defamation of a struggle which will need to be resumed, albeit at a higher level. In any case, then, and **particularly** in the case of a reactionary compromise of this kind, our approach must remain the same.

We invite all of the organisations (and individual comrades) to whom this note is addressed, to make an effort to read as much of the material that we have produced on the subject as possible and exchange with us their own points of view in the subjectively common interest of advancing the theory, programme and organisation of international revolutionary communism.

Communist salutations.

October 1990

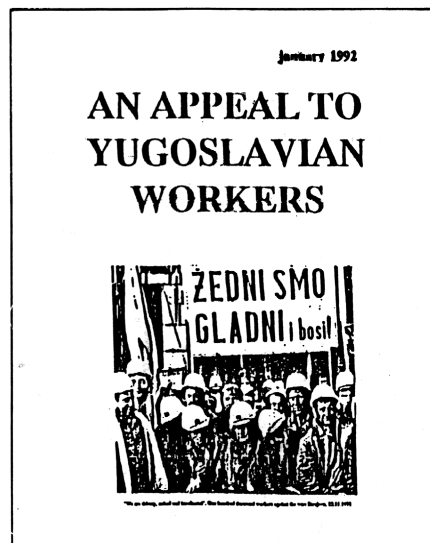
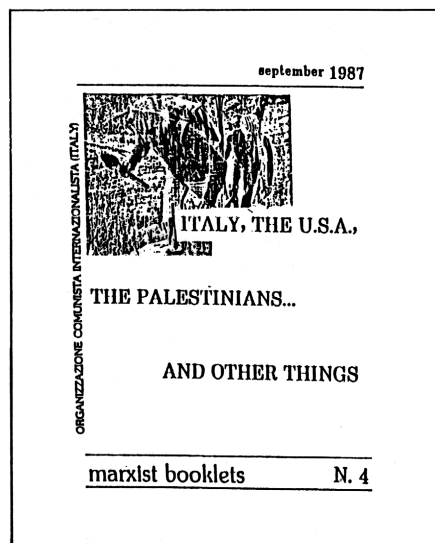
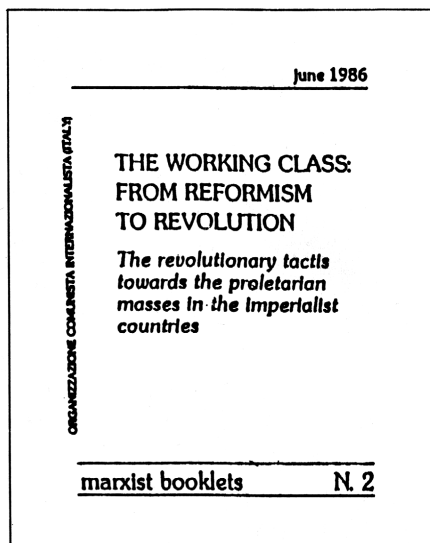
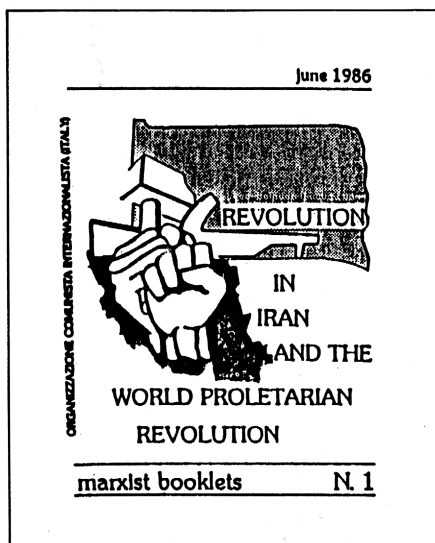
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